THE

College Classics Series

OF

SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS.

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MOUNT ROAD.

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM,

EDITED WITH

INTRODUCTION AND ANNOTATIONS,

BY

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WITH AN

INTRODUCTION ON SHAKESPEARE,

BY THE

GENERAL EDITOR.

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PREFACE.

THIS edition maintains the method of copious annotation characteristic of the series. Some material that in other volumes is handled in appendices, such as discussion of the text, I have included in the Notes, believing that it may be advantageous for the student to have on one page all that is to be said on one passage. This volume contains less of grammatical explanation than some others and, perhaps, more of reference to the arts of poetic or literary style. In its preparation my chief obligations have been due to the New Variorum Edition, edited by MR. H. H. FURNESS. I have also to acknowledge many suggestions from the general Editor of this series.

R. S.

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THE LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE.

Ancestry.

The ancestry of William Shakespeare cannot be traced back far with any certainty. His grandfathers we know however to have been Warwickshire farmers. Thus even if no noble blood flowed in the poet's veins, he inherited the English yeoman nature, than which no other presents a soil more likely under favouring conditions to produce good fruit of whatever kind. His father, John Shakespeare, settled in Stratford-on-Avon, the town nearest to the paternal farm, where he seems to have combined a variety of trades—in skins, wool and corn—such as his farming connexion would naturally suggest. His marriage to Mary Arden brought to him a farm of some value, an advantage which he would turn to good account. Steadily he rose in the consideration of his fellow-townsmen and in municipal office till in the year 1568 he was bailiff (or mayor) of the borough. A typical representative of the English middle-class, marked by business shrewdness and practical common-sense, sturdy independence, industrious regularity and steadiness of aim—such was the father of Shakespeare.

Of his mother we know practically nothing. From her antecedents we might infer that she was more refined than her husband, and the readers of her son's dramas will find it easy to believe that into the Stratford home she brought an element of gentleness and even romance which the hard-headed factor-father, immersed as he must have been in business private and municipal, could not supply.

Childhood. 1564—1577.

To these parents was born in April 1564 the future poet. The exact day of his birth is unknown—that of his baptism, which would be a few days later, was April 26th. Of his childhood it is easy to form pictures of some verisimilitude. The charm of the Warwickshire scenery becomes an abiding influence even upon the casual visitor, and such a mind as Shakespeare's must have been saturated with it. The hills and woods, the flowery lanes, the streamlets, and the upland pastures of that lovely county moulded his mind and permeated with their memories the writings of his manhood. Nor must the historical and legendary associations of the county be overlooked. The great Church—the glory of Stratford—continually reminded the townsmen that they had furnished to the kingdom a Primate and a Chancellor in the brave days of Edward III. Guy's Cliff with its tales of the great champion and hermit, Guy Earl of Warwick, was within reach, and would be well-known at least by hearsay to every Stratford boy. Warwick with its lordly castle and its associations with the King-maker would for the imaginative lad give shape and reality to the stories handed down

from the days of the old feudal barons. The legends of Coventry would set before his 'thinking thoughtless' mind the hard lord of earlier days, the ideal of womanhood, and the type of shameless meanness. Just over the borders of the county is Bosworth Field, where a century before one of his ancestors is said to have fought for the Lancastrian house.

His father though apparently unable himself to write had the English business-man's determination to give his son a sound education. At seven years of age it seems that William Shakespeare was sent to the Town Grammar School. Here the chief study was Latin—invaluable as discipline in the use of language and as a literary stimulus. As in the case of most English boys however the solid advantages of the school were less memorable than instances of truancy and escapades, and the instruction of the pedagogue proved less important than the wider education that boys find for themselves in their games and sports, their imitation of their elders, and their relations with one another.

Meanwhile the boy's fancy was being fed in many ways. Even if he was never taken to Coventry to see the far-famed Mysteries of that city, he must have seen in Stratford itself the annual Miracle Play on St. George's day, when the Dragon and other favourite but horrible characters played their part along with saints and martyrs at different stations in the town.

From the year when his father was Bailiff of Stratford, the little town had been regularly visited by companies of actors, such as that described in *Hamlet*, and all that we know of John Shakespeare would encourage

the belief that his family would not be kept away from their performances. In 1575, too, Queen Elizabeth made her great Progress, and was welcomed at the neighbouring castle of Kenilworth with those lavish entertainments whose effect upon the wondering mind of the Warwickshire boys of the time we may inadequately measure by their impression upon our minds to-day.

Youth. 1577—1587 (?)

At what age he left school is unknown, as is his occupation after that step. His father's family was growing and his means diminishing, so that the lad would not be allowed to live without employment—but whether there is any truth in any of the traditions or half-guesses that he was apprenticed to a butcher, that he was a lawyer's clerk, a doctor's assistant, a country schoolmaster or his father's helper we cannot tell.

At the end of 1582 William Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, inferior to him in station and senior to him by some seven years. The house from which probably he married her is still pointed out, a mile's pleasant walk across the fields from Shakespeare's home, a husbandman's cosy cottage standing in its little garden, and covered to-day, as perhaps it was three centuries ago, by climbing honey-suckle. The marriage was hurried on, and six months later Shakespeare's eldest child, Susanna, was born. Two years later two younger children, twins—Hamnet and Judith—were baptized at Stratford Church; but this is the only information that has reached us with regard to this period of Shakespeare's life.

Period of Struggle in London. 1587 (?)—1593.

At last, though we know not when, the epoch-making step was taken. The decline of his father's business, the claims of his family, a talented young man's ambition, and complications with the magnate of the neighbourhood* would seem to have combined to drive him from Stratford to the larger opportunities of advancement that London afforded.†

* Rowe, whose biographical sketch prefixed to his edition of Shakespeare's Works (1709) was the earliest Life of the poet, states:—'He had by a misfortune, common enough to young fellows, fallen into ill company, and amongst them, some that made a frequent practice of deer-stealing, engaged him more than once in robbing a park that belonged to Sir Thomas Lucy, of Charlcote, near Stratford. For this he was prosecuted by that gentleman, as he thought somewhat too severely; and in order to revenge that ill usage, he made a ballad upon him. And though this, probably the first essay of his poetry, be lost, yet it is said to have been so very bitter, that it redoubled the prosecution against him to that degree, that he was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire for some time, and shelter himself in London.' This account can scarcely be literally correct in every detail, but combined with other evidence it may be regarded as showing that Shakespeare had got into trouble with Sir Thomas Lucy. That knight is almost certainly caricatured by Shakespeare in the Justice Shallow of the Falstaff plays. As a strongly Protestant county magistrate he was especially busy in hunting out those who came under the anti-Papal penal legislation. In 1583, he took part in the arrest and prosecution for treason of Edward Arden and his wife, who may have been connexions of Shakespeare's, and in 1592 his signature appears appended to a letter to the Council enumerating a number of suspected 'recusants' including the poet's father. Thus religious partisanship may have entered into the attitude of the poet towards him.

† The theory that Shakespeare left Stratford with the 'Lord Leicester's Players' after their visit to that town in 1587 is a mere guess, though it may be true. The statement, made to add probability to it, that Burbage and Greene, two of those players, were Warwickshire neighbours, is now doubted.

The bare fact of this migration is all that we really know of Shakespeare's life between 1585 and 1592. That he connected himself at once with the theatre seems certain. Tradition represents him as holding the position of an attendant, in some capacity or other. His quickness and steadiness soon opened his way, and by 1592 his status, both as actor and as playwright, was so marked as to expose him to the hostility of some of the leading personages connected with the London stage. In August of that year Robert Greene, whose position as a playwright was second only to that of Marlowe, addressed to his comrades a warning against the ingratitude of players, singling out Shakespeare in oft-quoted words for attack, as 'an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide* supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and being an absolute Iohannes factotum is in his owne conceit the onely Shakescene in a countrie.' But if Shakespeare had enemies who could express themselves with such bitterness, he had friends no less staunch. The very editor who had given to the world these words of the dying and deserted Greene, before the year closed handsomely apologised for his part in the attack. 'My selfe have seene,' said he, 'his demeanor no lesse civill than he exelent in the qualitie he professes (*i.e.*, his profession as an actor). Besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing that aprooves his Art.' The two passages point to Shakespeare's

success as an actor; to the employment of his pen in the revision for the stage of plays even by such distinguished writers as Marlowe, Greene and Peele; to his having produced original work. But as yet nothing from his hand had been printed. Playing companies naturally kept for their own use as long as possible the plays they performed, and indeed plays in those days were scarcely regarded as matter worthy of the press.

Period of Growing Fame. 1593—1597.

It was in writing of other kinds that a place among literary men was to be won, and this the ambitious young genius challenged in 1593 by the production of 'the first heire of my invention,' his voluptuous narrative poem of *Venus and Adonis*. This was dedicated to the young Earl of Southampton, whose patronage he had perhaps already won. The immediate success of the poem, which not only had the merit of a fresh beauty and appreciation of Nature, but also seems to have been regarded as a manual of sensual love, encouraged the poet to produce in the following year the higher companion poem of *Lucrece*, dedicated to the same nobleman. The popularity of these two poems seems to have given so wide a vogue to Shakespeare's name as to suggest its illegitimate use as a means of gain. 'The Passionate Pilgrim,' a little volume of verse, ascribed to him, and published five years later, was a compilation of various writers, Shakespeare's share being comparatively small, and all being probably pirated. Meanwhile Shakespeare was following his profession as an actor. He seems to have been a regular member of

the Company of the 'Queen's Players,'—as 'the Lord Chamberlain's Servants' were popularly called—which at holiday seasons constantly appeared before Elizabeth in her various palaces. The Inns of Court, too, found their entertainment in those days in scenical displays of one kind or another, and Shakespeare and his comrades are found not infrequently acting at these festivities. As an actor, especially of 'kingly parts,' he would seem to have ranked high, though not among the highest. But Shakespeare the playwright was becoming of more consideration than Shakespeare the actor. Whatever the position of the former in his Company might be, that of the latter was supreme. His plays became more and more the staple of the Company. It has been estimated that of 28 plays acted before the Queen by 'the Lord Chamberlain's Servants,' 20 were written by Shakespeare. Nor were the Company's performances limited to London. Provincial tours—in which we note that Stratford was occasionally visited—added to its repute and resources, and unfolded for its dramatist the local surroundings for such future plays as *King Lear* and *Cymbeline*.

Period of Prosperity. 1597—1613 (?)

Aided perhaps by contributions from patrons like Southampton, after the fashion of the time, the poet-actor was enabled to carry out some of his early schemes. The ebb in his father's fortunes he stayed. No doubt under his son's influence, John Shakespeare applied in 1596 for recognition as a 'gentleman,' and in the following year obtained a favourable reply. In 1597, too, the poet bought New Place, perhaps the most

desirable house in Stratford. Alike in Stratford and in London he has property and is recognised as a person of importance. The loss of his son Hamnet alone chequered for him these years of growing prosperity. Stratford he seems to have regarded as his real home. If tradition can at all be trusted, he had left his family there when he came to London. We are told that he made yearly visits to his home, till he was able to settle there more fixedly. Piece by piece he acquired property in or near Stratford till long ere his death he must have become by far its wealthiest burgess. The growth of his wealth was doubtless aided by the sums which accrued to him as his share 'in the profits of that they call the house,' after the erection of the famous *Globe* Theatre in 1598 by his colleagues, the Burbages.

Party feeling in the closing years of Elizabeth's reign ran so strongly that few, if any, could keep themselves outside its whirlpool. Persons brought into such close relations with the Court as this favoured Company of players could not fail to be touched by the intrigues of the time. Shakespeare himself was practically committed to a side in the bitter struggle between the courtly and generous but headstrong Essex and the calculating schemer Cecil, for his friend and patron Southampton was the foremost supporter of Essex. The *Globe* gave its aid to that ill-fated Earl. The Prologue to the Fifth Act of *King Henry V* testifies to this day of the friendly hopes with which Shakespeare followed his expedition to Ireland in 1599, and the fact that the conspirators induced Shake-

speare's Company to give 'a play of the deposing and killing of King Richard'—possibly Shakespeare's *Richard II*—on the day before Essex' attempted rising, indicates a friendly complicity in the plot. In view of the execution of Essex and the imprisonment of Southampton which followed the collapse of the movement, it is not strange that—as Chettle noted at the time—Shakespeare contributed nothing to the volumes of verse evoked by the death of the Queen two years later. It is noteworthy, too, that the year following the plot of Essex, Shakespeare and his Company, Queen's Players though they were, instead of acting before the Queen, are found touring probably as far north as Aberdeen.

We have seen Shakespeare as the actor on the stage, as the man of business, as the playwright during this period. Shakespeare in his recreation may well claim our notice too. At the Mermaid—the tavern or restaurant which stageland made its own—we may see him, seated among his friends. There is the high-born dramatist, Francis Beaumont, who has handed down to us his admiration of the nimble wit that flashed there to and fro. There is Burbage the greatest actor of the day. There is his rival Alleyn. There perhaps is Edmund Shakespeare who followed his famous eldest brother to the London stage: but here, the centre of all, is the great pair, William Shakespeare and Benjamin Jonson. 'Many,' says Fuller, 'were the wit combats between him and Ben Jonson, which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war. Master

Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid, but slow in his performances. Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention.' Between the two great dramatists there seems to have subsisted a real though not unbroken friendship.

James I, upon his accession to the crown, took Shakespeare's Company under his patronage and permitted it to use the title, The King's Players. They appeared in his suite at his coronation; they constantly acted before him, his Queen, and his visitors; they repaid his favour with their compliments.

For perhaps ten years during the new reign, Shakespeare maintained his connexion with the London stage. In some obscure fashion he shared in the management of Blackfriars Theatre as well as the Globe. After 1604 he probably acted rarely, if at all. But to these years belongs the production of many of his master-pieces. Yet of his London life at this time we have little definite record. In 1607 his actor-brother died in Southwark. The Stratford side of his life was evidently engrossing more and more of his thought. Besides many money transactions connected with property or debts in the little town, which show that his poetical genius did not blunt his business keenness, the Stratford registers inform us of several domestic events connected with the poet. His father had died in 1601. His mother followed in 1608. In 1607 his elder daughter,

Susanna, married a physician, John Hall, whose skill recommended him even to many who detested his Puritanism. The baptisms of their infant daughter and of an Alderman's son for whom the poet stood as god-father are duly recorded in the Parish Church records of 1608.

Period of Retirement. 1613 (?)—1616.

The close of this period of Shakespeare's life may perhaps be assigned to 1613. In that year he bought a large house near Blackfriars Theatre—which he shortly afterwards let on lease. A little later the *Globe* was burnt down, the conflagration beginning during a performance of *Henry VIII.* It was rebuilt in 1614—but probably there was no renewal of Shakespeare's connexion with the stage. At any rate from 1613 at the latest Shakespeare resided at Stratford. We have little to aid our imagination in picturing his life.

One entry in the borough accounts for 1614 shows us Shakespeare entertaining a Puritan preacher who had visited Stratford. In February 1616 his younger daughter married, her husband being four years her junior.

In March of that year Shakespeare fell ill, and made his last will and testament, leaving most of his property to his elder daughter. His wife, his second daughter, his sister and her children, the poor of Stratford, his chief fellow-actors were all appropriately remembered.

On April 23rd, 1616, he died. Two days later he was buried within the chancel of the Parish Church.

A monument was soon after set up on the Church walls, the main portion of which is a bust of the poet—probably the best representation of his appearance that has reached us. In 1670 Shakespeare's last descendant died.

THE DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE.

Before proceeding to treat of the production of his plays—more truly the life of Shakespeare than the account of the London actor who was also a shrewd Stratford burgess which has hitherto occupied us,—it is necessary to clearly set before ourselves the development already attained by the drama at the date of his first connexion with the stage.

Miracle Plays.

Often perhaps too much stress has been laid upon the part played by the old Miracle Plays and Moralities in the production of the Shakespearian Drama. They formed as it were the soil rather than the seed from which that form of literature sprang. Originating with the clergy in their desire for the instruction of the people, they soon passed under the management of trade-gilds, and became, after the institution in the fourteenth century of the great popular annual holiday of Corpus Christi, the recognised form of urban entertainment. Thus was created that almost universal taste for theatrical exhibitions and that habit of attending them which go far to explain the vogue of the drama in Elizabethan days. There can be no doubt that the ready acceptance of poor conventional devices for the representation of the heroic and super-

natural in miracle-plays made possible to Shakespeare and his contemporaries the treatment of some of their themes, which their 'furniture' could not adequately set forth. To the conditions of their representation also may be traced the very human element so conspicuous in the English drama, and the blending of the gravest matter with the comedy of low life which makes the plays of Shakespeare so true to life. The growing liberty of choice in subject, the nearer approach to literary form, the increased inventiveness and skill in the manipulation of plots marked by the transition from Miracle Play to Morality, show that there was life in this indigenous irregular drama which might have secured it a brilliant future, had it not perished under the shadow of a more vigorous rival.

The Interlude.

The golden days of the early reign of Henry VIII introduced another force. His gaiety and love of display led to the fashion of pageantry of many kinds. Side by side with the mummery and the Masque, a new importation from the carnivals of Italy, in which the King and courtiers themselves took part, we hear of Interludes, short dramatic sketches usually satirical, played before the Court in the interval or at the close of banquets. The multiplication of these entertainments was necessarily followed by the growth of a profession devoted to their provision. Even Henry VII had found it needful to maintain a band of four players, but under his successors not merely the Court, but many noble households, too, kept a company of actors

and a Master of the Revels. Thus arose a class dependent for their livelihood upon their power to entertain, naturally therefore cultivating the Interlude and other approved dramatic forms.

The Classical Drama.

But it was an age of learning, and, especially after Henry VIII's youthful extravagance was checked, men sought to combine instruction with entertainment. In the Universities above all but also wherever learning was patronised, the drama acquired a new function. The Latin drama had a high place in the studies of the time. The performance of the plays of the ancient dramatists was undertaken as a part of education—as in some of our public schools it is continued to this day. Translations of these plays and of their Italian copies began to appear. Imitations of them, first in Latin and then in the vernacular, soon became common. Thus arose a new type of English drama. Plautus and Terence became the examples for Comedy: Euripides and Seneca—the artificial dramatist of the early Roman Empire—for Tragedy. The rules laid down by Aristotle and Horace for the drama of their days were regarded as binding on the English players of Elizabethan days. Originally merely academic exercises, these imitations of classical plays soon found new scope. A schoolmaster would write such for the instruction of his pupils; a poet in search of a patron for the entertainment of some noble; a reformer to bring his views before some one powerful enough to give them weight; amateurs simply for love of writing or for the exercise of their gifts.

At Shakespeare's birth then we might sum up the condition of affairs dramatic thus:—

(1) The people, pervaded by a love of theatrical representation, are still mainly dependent for its satisfaction upon the Moralities and Mysteries performed by Gilds on the great festival-days.

(2) In the households of the King and nobles are maintained companies of players, who, though they may occasionally be called upon to act in some play of a more or less definitely classical type, more usually entertain their master with interludes or longer representations of the same kind.

(3) In the Universities and Schools plays of the classical type are constantly written and acted as academic exercises.

In the story of the English drama during the earlier part of Elizabeth's reign the main feature is that the tendencies represented by these three statements were violently acting upon each other.

The Rival Schools.

In those years the academic influence upon the Court was continuous. Elizabeth's own character, the intercourse between London and University circles, perhaps greater in those days than in our own, the presence of John Lyly, the Oxford graduate in the Court, as an informal Master of the Revels, the constant employment of the children of the Royal Chapel-schools in the entertainment of the Queen—all tended to bring the courtly stage under the academic influence. On the other hand the traditions of the Masque and Interlude tended to preserve a greater

liberty of treatment and of matter than the rules of the Classical drama permitted. At the same time the drama, primarily intended for the noble household or for the academy, began to spread to the people. The 'Servants' of Leicester, of Warwick and other nobles brought this new form of entertainment within reach of the public, acting in the courtyards of inns or elsewhere for such remuneration as they could thus gain. The Mysteries disappeared under this rivalry, the Moralities maintained a precarious existence for a few decades more. But their influence lived on in the mould which they impressed upon the nascent drama. The mixture of tone, the wide range of subject, the vivid reproduction of scenes and characters of low life which mark the Elizabethan drama are absolutely unknown to the Seneca school which then prevailed in the academic world. In presenting itself for the suffrages of the populace, the drama had to comply with the popular demands. Not at once did the classical school recognise popular plays which most irregularly mingled comedy and tragedy, brought upon the stage men of all ranks, and trusted rather to variety and movement than style and development of plot. But by 1580 the drama had become the common form of entertainment, for citizen and courtier alike—and a national type was forming itself. Experiments after the fashion of Seneca like *Gorboduc* had failed. The Interlude and Morality were dead or dying. In place of all was arising a type which, while borrowing from the classical drama the division into Acts and Scenes, and many lessons in

the art of Plot and Poetry, retained the pointedness and humour of the Interlude, and the freedom of movement, the almost epic treatment and the wealth of characterisation of the Miracle-Play.

The type was still somewhat unshapely, bearing obvious marks of its composite origin. Fixed metre it had none, for example. Side by side might be found rhyming couplets of the old iambic heptameters ('fourteeners,' the metre of Macaulay's Lays): the doggrel anapæstic tetrameters: stanzas of varying form: and even, in plays of the more classical type, such as *Gorboduc*, what claimed to be blank verse, which Surrey had introduced as the English equivalent of the statelier metres of Latin poetry.

The University Wits.

At this point a new divergence began. In the decade of 1580 to 1590, a little band of University men became conspicuous in the production of plays. Marlowe, Greene, Peele, Lodge and Nash were all men of genius, trained in classical literature, but nearly all of them men of a Bohemian life. They brought to their work a spirit of daring and of poetry hitherto wanting. If it often produced mere bombast and rant, it often struck forth verses of a force or charm never yet associated with the stage. If allusions to the classics from which they had learnt their art were too abundant in their verse, at least the classic ideal of form and beauty moulded it. And they were the first to show that for the British drama blank verse was the true medium. It was they who first applied blank verse to plays for the people. Marlowe's 'mighty

line,' which gave to blank verse at once a flexibility and a richness of sound unknown to it before, is usually treated as the pioneer of this revolution. But Peele's smooth and gently flowing versification, at a still earlier date, deserves notice, and though Marlowe's pre-eminent genius makes his influence the weightiest in this matter, that of the whole group was after some hesitation thrown into the same scale.

To them, too, may be ascribed the origin of the English tragedy. Attempts had been made before, but the first tragedies that are still read except as curiosities are Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and *Dr. Faustus*. Passion has found an utterance. And the action takes place before the spectators instead of being merely reported to them. The Greek devices of messenger and chorus lose their importance. The English drama for the first time attains to the level of poetry and claims for itself the service of energy and style. The appearance of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* about 1586 may be taken as marking the epoch of this revolution.

Such a movement could not fail to provoke opposition. And the dramatists of the day fall into two classes according to their relation to it.

The Actor-Playwrights.

Professional habits are always slow to change. Hitherto the plays acted by a Company had usually been written by one of the Company. These actor-playwrights clung tenaciously to their old ways, and continued their doggrel and fourteeners, despite the example of Marlowe and Peele. To this class at first Shakespeare it would seem attached himself. The

movement gradually however overbore all resistance. Shakespeare yielded to the influence of Marlowe completely for a time, though he soon was able to make the lessons Marlowe had taught serve his own individuality, combining in his mature work the freedom of style, the easy naturalness of language, the suitability for stage representation for which the actor-playwrights had contended, with the high ideal and stateliness and metrical appropriateness of Marlowe's writing.

Greene.

Greene in addition to the support he finally gave to Marlowe's adoption of blank verse contributed himself other elements to the development of the Elizabethan drama. It was his authority perhaps above all that secured recognition for the combination of the humorous and the serious in the same play. And to him may be traced the practice of weaving together into the same play two or more plots. But the honour of originating this device he must share with Lyly—who also first showed the parts prose and songs might legitimately play in the drama.

Italian Influences.

The influence of the Italian imitations of the Classical drama upon England has already been referred to. But the English drama owed more to Italy than this. That country was for four centuries the literary guide of mediæval Europe—but at no time was its guidance recognised in England more than in the Sixteenth Century. The Italian drama was the first to break away from the leading-strings of antiquity, and there

is evidence that in the light comedies of Florence and Siena, Shakespeare found suggestion and inspiration. Two forms of the drama, the pastoral play and the tragicomedy, which we connect inseparably with Shakespeare's name, the English stage borrowed direct from the Italian, where they originated about 1570.

To two other forms of Italian literature the English drama owed more. The earlier of these in date of birth was the Tale or Novel. Boccaccio's name naturally springs to our mind in this connexion, but he was but one—and indeed scarcely a typical one—of a great number of writers who set forth in a lively manner incidents of every kind.

The second was the Romance, which, originating in France, had found its highest developments in the Romantic Epics of Ariosto and Tasso. The ground had been well prepared. Among the ideals of chivalry, two especially had been carefully fostered—ambition of exploits in arms, devotion to the lady-love. This latter was even unhealthily nurtured and popularised through the sentimentalism which from Petrarch's days permeated so many parts of Italian literature, and which was an element common to the Romance and to many of the tales and novels already referred to.

These Tales and these Romances corresponded in Elizabethan England to what we should call the reading of the age. Translations of them either direct or through the French were in the hands of the readers of the time. Their matter was repeated to those

who could not read. Long before Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet* other playwrights had seen the dramatic possibilities that lay within them. The Italian Novel became a favourite resource of writers in search of a plot. With its advantages this influence had its drawbacks. Sir Philip Sidney points out how under it the actor-playwrights produced dramas that were wanting in almost all that distinguishes the drama. Taking as his model the classical type he contrasts the long stumbling progress of their romance-plays with the clearly defined movement of a true drama. With the unity that is given to the latter by the relation of every part to the *catastrophe*, the minor incidents treated by the way in the former and its digressions were absolutely incompatible. As with the other points in dispute between the actor and classicist schools of playwrights, this also was tending to a happy compromise in the treatment of Marlowe and his group, before Shakespeare attained to any eminence upon the English stage, and like them, too, it found in him its final solution.*

* Not long ago on the London stage a revival of the old Romantic Play was attempted. Dramatisations of the stories of *King Arthur* and *Don Quixote* which were in their essential features of this type had for a time some vogue. In contrast with the ordinary play which is concerned with the unravelling of a knot, and in which each character has its part in that unravelling, these were devoted rather to the relation of the story of a central personage, minor personages as in real life entering into the action and passing out of it only incidentally.

Histories.

Among the types of play already struck out by Shakespeare's predecessors were two others in which his genius was afterwards to win some of its greatest triumphs—the Chronicle and the Classical Historical play. The exact origin of these it is hard to discover. The object of imparting instruction may well have contributed to it. At the same time the subjects bear a superficial resemblance to the romances, which may have encouraged their dramatisation. The existence of these types must be included in Shakespeare's debt to his predecessors. Chronicle-plays had long been in vogue when Marlowe's *Edward II* did for them what his other plays had done for Tragedy. From the treasure-house of dramatic resources contained in Ancient History Lyly, Lodge and many another had repeatedly drawn. But it was reserved for Shakespeare to show what might be accomplished on these lines by a dramatic genius who had steeped his mind in the narratives and picturesque language of Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577, 1587), and North's Translation of Plutarch's *Lives* (1580).

THE WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE.

Having now before us the framework of Shakespeare's life and also the general character of the drama when he first became connected with the stage, we may turn to a consideration of his works, and attempt to trace the development of his mind as therein revealed.

To this end it is essential that we should ascertain as far as possible the order of those works. This task might conceivably have been much greater than it is. For, as we have seen, plays were not at first regarded as literature. On the contrary they were treated as part of a theatrical Company's stock in trade, to be jealously preserved for its exclusive use. Hence their authorised publication was usually delayed as long as possible after their composition. During Shakespeare's life few, if any, of his plays were published with his sanction. It is to the desire of his friends for his posthumous fame that we owe the collection and publication seven years after his death of the plays which the Company with which he had been connected had hitherto kept in manuscript. The date of authorised publication therefore is of no assistance to us in fixing the chronology of his plays.

Evidences of Date. 1. Publication.

Fortunately for us however, though neither Shakespeare nor his Company gave his plays to the press, others saw their interest in doing so. Unscrupulous printers and others found means to turn the popularity of his plays as acted to their advantage. In one way or another they obtained copies of some of the plays and printed them for sale. Seventeen plays were thus given to the world—these editions being 'surreptitious or stolne' as his friends complained. The date of such a pirated copy is manifestly of some guidance to us, though we cannot argue that the play was even recent when it was printed.

Nor is other external evidence lacking. From notices in the diaries, and allusions or quotations in the writings of contemporaries we may often fix a point before which a play was produced. The most important aid of this kind is derived from a work called *Palladis Tamia* published in 1598 by Francis Meres. In a chapter comparing English poets with those of Greece and Rome he writes as follows:—"As the soule of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweete wittie soule of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare; witnes his Venus and Adonis, his Lucrece, his sugred Sonnets among his private friends, &c.—As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latines, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for comedy, witnes his Gentlemen of Verona, his Errors, his Love labors lost, his Love labors wonne, his Midsummer's night dreame and his Merchant of Venice; for tragedy, his Richard the 2, Richard the 3, Henry the 4, King John, Titus Andronicus and his Romeo and Juliet.—As Epius Stolo said that the Muses would speake with Plautus tongue, if they would speak Latin; so I say that the Muses would speak with Shakespeare's fine filed phrase, if they would speake English."

2. External allusions.

Since therefore the plays mentioned in this extract were already in existence in 1598, this date is one of the chief landmarks in the field of Shakespearian chronology.

3. Internal allusions.

We are further aided by allusions in the plays of Shakespeare to outside events or to other works whose date is known. The reference in *Henry V* to Essex' absence in Ireland already mentioned and the quotation in *As You Like It* from Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* may serve to illustrate this source of help.

4. Higher criticism.

So far we are on safe ground. We step however upon what is less certain when we attempt to apply the principles of the 'higher criticism' to the determination of the dates of Shakespeare's plays. These principles involve the examination of the spirit, language, style and versification of the plays, with a view to the discovery of the changes of the writer's mind and habit at different periods, and the assignment of each play to the appropriate date, after comparing it with others in regard to these features.

(a) Mental and Moral.

This criticism must take account both of the matter and of the form of the plays. It will endeavour to detect progress in power of characterisation, in the expression of passion, in constructive skill, in dramatic art. It will lay its finger upon differences of tone, of moral sensitiveness, of mental grasp. It will trace development in the knowledge of human character and of the world at large. Variation in these points may be conspicuous, though incapable of tabulation.

(b) Formal (including Metrical).

Formal and metrical variations are scarcely less important. Criticism must mark changes in the diction and style, in the verse-structure and metre of the plays. Of late special attention has been given to these last two points, and the Metrical tests have engrossed a disproportionate amount of scholars' care.

The main Metrical tests may be enumerated as follows :—

(1) The use of doggrel and stanzas.

(2) The proportion of rhyming lines.

(3) The use of Alexandrines—iambic hexameters.

(4) The proportion of *end-stopped* lines, *i.e.*, of lines where a pause in the sense coincides with the close of the line; as contrasted with *run-on* lines where the sense passes on without a break from one line to the next. [This running-on is sometimes called *enjambement.*]

E.g. Now all the blessings
Of a glad father compass thee about.—
Tempest, V. i. 179, 180.

(5) The proportion of '*double endings*,' or '*feminine endings*,' *i.e.*, where lines end in an extra syllable after the close of the fifth foot.

E.g. These two young gentlemen that call me father.—
Cymbeline, V. v. 329.

(6) The proportion of '*weak endings*,' *i.e.*, instances where in the final foot (the fifth) of the line, the second half is a monosyllabic particle belonging in sense to

the next line, and not strong enough to bear either emphasis or pause.

E.g. The gods throw stones of sulphur on me, *if*
That box I gave you was not thought by me
A precious thing.—*Cymbeline*, V. v. 241—3.

(7) The proportion of '*light endings*'—similar to weak-endings, but in them the final monosyllable is a rather stronger word, such as a Personal or Relative Pronoun, an Auxiliary Verb, &c.

E.g. The very instant that I saw you *did*
My heart fly to your service.—
Tempest, III. i. 64.

Now the use of doggrel and stanzas and the predominance of rhyme were typical of the actor-playwright school which Marlowe's influence destroyed. The frequent use of the Alexandrine was a device of the earlier dramatists for variation of their metre when their blank verse was stiff through the prevalence of end-stopped lines. Run-on lines, double-endings, weak-endings, light-endings are all innovations marking a growing mastery over blank verse and desire for liberty from the rigid rules which bound it in its earlier days. These tests then obviously furnish some general guidance to the chronology of the plays.

Illustration.

This higher criticism has little difficulty in finding matter for its consideration. No one who compared, *e.g.*, *Love's Labour Lost* with *The Tempest* could fail to mark the difference between the elaborately ornate style, the conceits and classical allusions of the former and the directness of the latter; nor to see in the latter an easier hand-

ling of character and plot, a wider range of thought, observation, reflection and imagination, a profounder and maturer knowledge of life and a stronger feeling of its seriousness.

The differences of form are no less obvious than those of style and matter. Rhyme is a marked feature of *Love's Labour Lost*. It contains stanzas of many forms. Even where blank verse is used, the lines are regular, not to say stiff, the pauses fall monotonously at the close of the lines, and speeches usually begin and end with complete lines. In *The Tempest* all these features are changed. Rhyme scarcely appears. Prose and blank verse divide the play. The regularity of the iambic pentameter with its steady beat is frequently varied, in almost every manner possible; the sentences pass over from line to line; the pause falls elsewhere as frequently as at the close of a line; and speeches constantly begin and end in broken lines. These differences are so conspicuous that we can scarcely be wrong in assigning the plays to different stages of Shakespeare's life. In themselves they furnish a presumption that *The Tempest* is the later play, for they point to a more mature intellect, temper, judgment and taste, and a greater mastery over blank verse in its production. This inference is confirmed by all external evidence. A pirated edition of *Love's Labour Lost* is dated 1598. In the same year Meres mentions it in his list of Shakespeare's excellent comedies. On the other hand *The Tempest* contains references to books published in 1603 and probably to events of the year 1609, and no

reference to it has been discovered of a time earlier than 1613.

Moreover from what has been said about the pre-Shakespearian drama it will be clear that in the features in which *Love's Labour Lost* differs most markedly from *The Tempest* it resembles the earlier plays of the actor-playwright school. Thus by a combination of arguments based upon external evidence and critical considerations we have separated a play of an early period and a play of a late period in Shakespeare's dramatic career. These are now at our command as standards of comparison for others, and the resemblance in form, structure or spirit of any other play to either of these becomes entitled to consideration in fixing its date. Starting thus from a few known points, we may complete in this way with some approximation to the truth the chronology of Shakespeare's works.

The Metrical Test pressed too far.

The combination of the lines of reasoning above referred to may be said to have produced agreement among scholars in a broad classification of the plays into three or four groups corresponding to different periods of the poet's dramatic career.* Some,

*Dr. Dowden has admirably summarised the results of the work of a host of Shakespearian critics in the following paragraph (*Shakespeare—His Mind and Art*, p. 59) :—

'As characteristic of (Shakespeare's) early plays, we may notice (i) frequency of rhyme, in various arrangements; (*a*) rhymed couplets; (*b*) rhymed quatrains; (*c*) the sextain, consisting of an alternately rhyming quatrain, followed by a couplet (the arrangement of the last lines of his sonnets); (ii) occurrence of rhymed doggrel verse in two forms; (*a*) very

however, not content with this, have endeavoured to fix the chronology in fuller detail, by applying too mechanically the Metrical Tests already described. As compared with tests of matter, power and style these tests admit of arithmetical numeration. Any one, however lacking in critical insight, may count the number of run-on lines or double-endings in a play. It is far easier to say which of two plays has a greater proportion of light-endings than which shows the more profound knowledge of life. And sometimes there has been a tendency to treat the different results obtained from two plays of the same group by such calculations as enabling us to fix almost by rule of thumb the chronological relation between them. This, however, is to misapply these important tests. If in one sense their results are definite, as being capable of tabulation, in another they are but the roughest representations of results. At best they are but indications of æsthetic tendencies in the poet's mind, and in using them we are applying material measures to mental states.

short lines, and (*b*) very long lines; (iii) comparative infrequency of the feminine (or double) ending; (iv) comparative infrequency of the weak-ending; (v) comparative infrequency of the unstopped line; (vi) regular internal structure of the line; extra syllables seldom packed into the verse; (vii) frequency of classical allusions; (viii) frequency of puns and conceits; (ix) wit and imagery drawn out in detail to the point of exhaustion; (x) clowns who are, by comparison with the later comic characters, outstanding persons in the play told off specially for clownage; (xi) the presence of termagant or shrewish women; (xii) soliloquies addressed rather to the audience, (to explain the business of the piece or the motives of the actors), than to the speaker's self; (xiii) symmetry in the grouping of persons.'

Hence it is hazardous to argue that among the plays of any period the order of production may be ascertained by comparing percentages of the occurrence of certain marks. That in *Richard II* and *The Comedy of Errors* one-fifth of each play is in rhyme while in *The Tempest* and *Winter's Tale* rhyme is practically absent may show that the two former belong to an early period in Shakespeare's dramatic career. But that the rhyming lines in *Richard II* are 20 per cent. of the whole and in the *Comedy of Errors* are 21 per cent., surely cannot be relied on as proving the priority of either. The Metrical Test will also divide the plays into two great classes, those in which the light-ending appears and those from which it is absent, but it is insufficient to decide whether *The Tempest* in which it occurs 28 times in each 1,000 lines is earlier than *Cymbeline* where on an average it is found in each 1,000 lines 29 times.

For these variations are the result of artistic feeling, not of calculation. A peculiarity which at one period Shakespeare felt himself entitled to use only exceptionally or not at all he came to regard as a legitimate device and then unconsciously to habitually employ. It is a question of style—and style rejects tabulation as an exact criterion of its development. With regard to rhyme, where, if anywhere, such numerical tests might have been expected to give sound results, the arithmetical school themselves have to confess that their percentages fail to afford more than the most general indications of date.

The accompanying table* furnishes some of the data for tracing the gradual production of Shakespeare's work.

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* Based upon that given by Dr. Furnivall in *The Leopold Shakspere.*

—	Percentage of Prose.	Percentage of Rhyme.	Percentage of Double End-ings in Blank Verse.	Percentage of Light End-ings.	Percentage of Weak End-ings.	Songs. Number of Lines.	Date of First Publication.	Earliest known Allusion.	Remarks.
Titus Andronicus ...	1·7	5·7	6·6	...	...	...	1600	1600	An adaptation by Shakespeare of an earlier play.
1 Henry VI	...	11·6	5·8	...	...	...	1623	1592	An older play retouched by Shakespeare.
Love's Labour Lost ...	39	38·1	1·6	...	...	32	1598	1598	Run-on lines 1 in 18; contains 3 sonnets and 194 'doggrel' lines and 236 lines rhyming alternately.
Comedy of Errors ...	13·5	21·4	12	...	...	...	1623	1594	64 alternates, 109 doggrel lines. Run-on lines 1 in 10·7.
2 Henry VI	14·7	4	9·9	...	...	...	1623	...	Older plays revised by Shakespeare, perhaps in collaboration with Marlowe.
3 Henry VI	...	5·3	12·6	...	...	...	1623	...	
Two Gentlemen of Verona	19·8	5·6	13·4	...	...	15	1623	1598	16 alternates, 18 doggrel. Run-on lines 1 in 10.

—	Percentage of Prose.	Percentage of Rhyme.	Percentage of Double Endings in Blank Verse.	Percentage of Light Endings.	Percentage of Weak Endings.	Songs. Number of Lines.	Date of First Publication.	Earliest known Allusion.	Remarks.
Midsummer Night's Dream	23	42·8	3·3	...	...	63	1600	1598	158 alternates.
Romeo and Juliet ...	11·3	16·2	5·6	...	...	...	1597	1595	62 alternates, 2 sonnets.
Richard II	...	20·3	6·1	...	...	...	1597	1595?	
Richard III	1·5	·5	15·7	...	...	...	1597	1595?	
King John	...	5·7	2·2	...	...	...	1623	1598	
Merchant of Venice ...	24·8	4·7	15·6	...	...	9	1600	1598	4 doggrel.
Taming of the Shrew ...	19·3	6·9	13·2	...	...	...	1623	...	
1 Henry IV	46·1	2·6	3·7	...	...	...	1598	1598	
2 Henry IV	54	2·3	1·4	...	...	15	1600	1598	
Merry Wives	89·5	2·2	14·1	...	...	19	1602	1602	
Henry V	45·3	3	17·4	...	...	8	1600	1599	1 sonnet.
Much Ado	74·6	2·5	20·6	...	...	16	1600	1600	
As You Like It ...	57·8	7	22·8	...	...	97	1623	1600	
Twelfth Night	54·1	4·4	19·9	...	...	60	1623	1601	
All's Well	48·7	9·4	18	...	...	12	1623	...	1 sonnet
Julius Cæsar	6·7	1·4	16·4	...	...	..	1623	1601	
Hamlet	30·7	2	24	...	...	60	1603	1602	
Measure for Measure ...	40·3	3·4	21·5	...	...	6	1623	...	
Troilus and Cressida ...	·34	5·6	21·8	...	...	16	1609	1609	

Othello	16·5	2·6	24·2	...	...	25	1622	1610	
King Lear	27·1	2·2	25·3	...	...	83	1608	1606	
Macbeth...	7·5	11·7	24·5	1·3	...	...	1623	1610	2 weak endings.
Timon of Athens ...	25·3	8·6	16·5	1·3	...	...	1623	...	
Antony and Cleopatra...	8·3	1·3	22·2	2·5	1·	6	1623	1608?	
Coriolanus	24·3	1·2	28·1	2·3	1·7	...	1623	1609?	
Pericles	17·5	12·7	8·3	2·7	1·3	...	1609	1608	
Tempest...	22·2	·1	32·6	2·8	1·7	96	1623	1613	Masque. Run-on lines 1 in 3.
Cymbeline	19·1	3·2	28·1	2·9	1·9	32	1623	1611	Vision. Run-on lines 1 in 2·5.
Winter's Tale	27·4	...	35	3·	2·5	57	1623	1611	Chorus. Run-on lines 1 in 2·1.
Henry VIII	2·4	·6	43·4	1·9	1·5	12	1623	1613	

Applying to the settlement of the chronology of his plays all the tests available to us, we find that they fall into four groups corresponding roughly to four different periods in his dramatic career. Where literary considerations form so large an element in the argument, it is often impossible to determine exactly the interrelation of the various members of a group. It may also be that a play which on literary grounds claims to be counted as a member of some group was produced later than the rest of that group by a temporary reversion to an earlier type. Allowance being made for such elements of uncertainty, the following scheme may be accepted as an approximate representation of the order and date of Shakespeare's Works.

PERIOD I.—APPRENTICESHIP.

Titus Andronicus	1588	Two Gentlemen of Verona	1592
1 Henry VI	1590	Midsummer Night's Dream	1593
Love's Labour Lost	1590	Romeo and Juliet	1593
Comedy of Errors	1591	Richard II	1593
2 Henry VI	1591	Richard III	1594
3 Henry VI	1591		

PERIOD II.—MATURE ART.

King John	1595	Henry V	1599
Merchant of Venice	1596	Much Ado About Nothing	1600
Taming of the Shrew	1597	As You Like It	1600
1 Henry IV	1597	Twelfth Night	1601
2 Henry IV	1598	All's Well that Ends Well	1601
Merry Wives of Windsor	1598		

PERIOD III.—DEEPER PASSION.

Julius Cæsar	1601	Lear	1605-6
Hamlet	1601-2	Macbeth	1605-6
Measure for Measure	1603	Timon of Athens	1607
Troilus and Cressida	1604	Antony and Cleopatra	1608
Othello	1604	Coriolanus	1608

PERIOD IV.—SERENITY AND RECONCILIATION.

Pericles...	1608	Winter's Tale	1611
Tempest...	1610	Henry VIII	1613
Cymbeline	1610		

First Period.

In the first period Shakespeare was only learning his art. His first work would seem to be that of retouching the plays of others. As one of a company of actors he knows the fashion of the day and follows it. Hence it is that the earliest play associated with his name is *Titus Andronicus*, perhaps an adaptation of an earlier play, and one only presentable in the short period when horror and mutilation held the stage. His earliest comedy is in the style of the actor-playwrights, and it is only by degrees that Shakespeare assimilates the lessons of Marlowe's work. Mr. Swinburne speaks of 'his evil angel, rhyme, yielding step by step and note by note to the strong advance of that better genius who came to lead him into the loftier path of Marlowe.' Ere the period closed, he had learnt that in History-play and Tragedy at any rate rhyme could not compete with blank verse. And he, who in his earliest work had shown himself an opponent of Marlowe, at the end of the period has surrendered himself wholly, as his *Richard III* shows, to that great dramatist's influence. It is probable that the turning-point is to be found half way through the period, for not without reason it has been suggested that in *2* and *3 Henry VI* both poets were concerned. Shakespeare is throughout the period rather the poet than the dramatist. This was

the period, it will be remembered, of his Poems, *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *Lucrece* (1594), and the fact is suggestive. His Histories and Tragedies are rhetorical rather than dramatic, and his Comedies however exquisite want movement. But he has found his power. For one who before he was thirty had written *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard III*, Comedy, Tragedy and History could have no task too great. Whatever his relations to others in regard to Tragedy, he had found a new field for Comedy in the combination of the charm of romantic fancy with the effect of a light and sparkling mirth. Much as Marlowe had taught him in other points, he could teach him nothing in Comedy.

Second Period.

The second period is that in which Shakespeare shows himself most thoroughly in command of his powers. His apprenticeship is over. He has stripped off the faults of youth and immaturity, and as yet has not been brought face to face with the existence of problems or passions beyond his power of facile expression. The romance of life filled his mind; the spring was in his blood. At the same time he has learnt the secret—which neither Marlowe nor Jonson ever learnt—that no man is merely the embodiment of *one* quality or humour or passion. His characters have become living men and women, many-sided, not to be hit off in one word of description, nor narrowed down to one interest.

Hence to this stage belongs the perfection of romantic comedy and of bright history-drama, for

lucid style, buoyant spirits, and characterisation under its lighter aspects could go no further than in such plays as *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *As You Like It*. And although not a single so-called Tragedy belongs to this period, such figures as King John, Arthur, and Shylock reveal to us that to the poet are being opened the recesses of passion. Moreover the sudden fall from the light-heartedness of *Twelfth Night* into the cloudy world of *All's Well* points to troubles in the poet's life, which would account in no small degree for the profounder thought and more serious tone of the next group of his plays.

Third Period.

The third period of Shakespeare's life produced those plays which have given him his reputation as The Thinker. Alike in thought, passion, style, there is strain. The poet we feel is putting forth all his strength in a struggle with the mysteries and problems of life. The easy mastery of his second period is gone; he is attempting mightier tasks now—tasks not to be accomplished without supreme effort nor without some disorder or distortion. This is most clearly marked in *King Lear*, in which passion and mystery are at their height.

This is the period of Tragedy. The names of Hamlet, Othello, Lear and Macbeth suggest varied passions at high tension. In the historical plays of the period we find the same character. Passing from the English chronicles Shakespeare chooses as his subjects those large characters of Greek and Roman history whom the world has been fain to regard as the very

embodiments of the various passions. Thus he provided himself with what seemed a wider stage for the display of ambition or love or misanthropy than he could find in the England of the Plantagenets. This keenness and largeness of feeling shows itself even in the comedies of the period. *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida* have none of the buoyancy of their predecessors. In both all the surroundings are depressing. The romance of life is absent or delusive. The world is corrupt, good is weak, man and woman are faithless. It would seem that Shakespeare himself was passing through temptations to misanthropy such as he depicts as overwhelming Timon.

Fourth Period.

In the fourth period he has been 'brought out into a large room.' The oppressive atmosphere is below him; the problems that haunted him have been laid; he has fought his doubts and gathered strength. Peace has come to him through victory—battle-purchased. He has learnt the lesson that forgiveness and reconciliation are the healing influences of life. He chooses for his subjects no longer the clashing of will with will, the unbending resolution of a high spirit, the persistent pursuit of revenge, but the victories of patience and of self-control and pardon. Neglecting *Henry VIII*—its doubtful position and the circumstances of its production permit this neglect—we may well see in Shakespeare's last three plays, *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*, the wisdom learnt by an experience of life in many

aspects—the knowledge, bought by many a defeat and by many a disillusionment, that far above all self-assertion and all triumphs of personal ambition or revenge is peace on earth, good-will to men.

The Sonnets.

In this review of Shakespeare's works no mention has yet been made of his *Sonnets*, though many of them are unsurpassed in beauty of poetic style and fancy or in richness of thought. There is much that is obscure about them, but what is known will throw light perhaps upon the development of Shakespeare's work. Some at least of them were in existence in 1598, for Meres mentions Shakespeare's 'sugred sonnets among his private friends.' They were not published till 1609—and then probably without their author's sanction. That their production was spread over several years is clear from their subjects and from express statements within them. They reveal to us some of the deep waters through which Shakespeare passed and show us how he bought some of the experience which speaks to us in his Plays.

The main motive of the first and larger group is Shakespeare's love for a certain *Will*. The relations between them are not always smooth. Will robs him of his mistress, encourages the poet's rivals, falls into vice, breaks away from him, but finally returns to him. Yet Shakespeare loves him throughout with a love like that of a lover for his mistress.

The smaller group is addressed to a dark mistress of the poet's, a married woman, false to her husband and false to him. She corrupts his friend *Will* and takes

him from him. Shakespeare is conscious of the sin of his connexion with her, at times loathes himself and her on account of it, but cannot tear himself away. Such in brief is the picture presented by the sonnets.

The dates of the sonnets unfortunately are unknown. Some have thought that this whole page of the poet's life was closed in 1598 or 1599, and that the dismissal of Falstaff by Henry V at the close of *2 Henry IV* marks Shakespeare's definite break with the life of looseness, the ill results of which he had seen in Marlowe, Greene and others. More probably we may trace in the tone of such plays as *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida* the gloom and bitterness born in him of the 'hell of time' which his separation from *Will* caused to them both. If this be so we can well understand the contrast between plays of the third and the fourth periods. *Troilus* is the product of a sinful soul, disillusioned and bitter; *Cymbeline* that of one which has escaped from the bonds of its sin, self-controlled, healed by pardon and sweetened by the love of what is pure.

Retrospect.

Thus as we look back over Shakespeare's life as revealed to us mainly in his works, we can trace his progress from the harmony of superficial views of life through discord to the harmony of knowledge. In *The Tempest* (V. i. 183) Miranda, in her ignorance of the world, seeing for the first time a company of men, exclaims 'How beauteous mankind is. O brave new world that has such people in it.' Prospero

who has tasted of the wrongs and disorders of life has gained, by knowledge and self-mastery, a peace of mind that makes the world even richer to him than to her. Such a contrast is there between the poet of the earlier plays and the poet of the latest. The virtue of the latter is the virtue gained by conflict and stablished by victory. His wisdom is a true knowledge of life that has faced its problems and met its doubts. His buoyancy is that of the man who has known the utmost that evil can do and from its defeat has assured himself in hope. His serenity is a peace that has conquered bitterness. His confidence rests not on an easy insensibility to sin but on the eternal goodness and the mercy that pardons. In a word, intensely human as he has shown himself throughout, sensitive to every influence that appeals to men, he comes forth from the test a *man*—to enjoy the peace of the victor, the knowledge of him who has *learnt*, the rest of the pardoned.

THE THEATRE IN SHAKESPEARE'S TIME.

To-day Shakespeare's plays are read by multitudes who never see them on the stage, and not improbably they find their warmest appreciation among this class. But their form was moulded by the fact that they were written for stage presentation, and a knowledge of the character of the theatre of Shakespeare's days is almost indispensable for a full comprehension of his work.

The development of the theatre during his life-time —well-nigh from its infancy to its maturity—was so rapid that there is some difficulty in forming a picture which may accurately represent the theatre as it was at any definite date. A general description, together with a rough statement of some of the changes, may however be attempted.

The Players.

At the date of Shakespeare's birth there were probably no buildings appropriated to the performance of plays. As yet indeed the play had scarcely established itself as a form of regular or popular entertainment. Its attraction and influence however are evidenced by the fact that the Council had thought it necessary on Elizabeth's accession to prohibit the performance of plays till they had assured themselves that there was no risk of any resistance to her authority which seditious plays might encourage. Even when the country was settled, the profession was hedged in by edicts forbidding plays to touch on politics or religion, and requiring that performances should be allowed only under license of the higher local authorities. Certain noblemen however secured general licenses for their private companies, and the profession became recognised. Elizabeth's love of amusement had its influence in this development. Her courtiers vied with one another in providing entertainment for her, and from them the contagion of the stage spread through the community. It is probable that never since then have the different classes of English society mingled so freely together

as they did in Elizabeth's days. Men lived out of doors as they do not to-day. The secluded home-life which is so marked a characteristic of England to-day was unknown then. Londoners took their meals together regularly at ordinaries and taverns. The houses of the great were open as they are not now. Noblemen had their followers who depended on them for maintenance and sustained their quarrels. Any man who brought news or could excite interest was welcome anywhere. And though the achievements of English enterprise show us what Elizabethans were capable of, it is probable that never were there in proportion more persons idle or with leisure, glad of any entertainment to wile away the day, than in the London of Shakespeare. Thus the social conditions of the age favoured the growth of play-going in many ways. The Companies of players accordingly soon found their profit in a wider field than their patrons' households or the Court. They turned to the people and began to give public performances; only however to meet with opposition from the Common Council, the governing body of the city of London.

The Growth of the Stage.

In 1563 an outbreak of plague swept away over 20,000 of the population, and the Common Council forbade all performances as likely to spread the infection. The Corporation was Puritan in its tendencies, and looked with suspicion on the gathering of crowds at the inns and taverns where the players acted, as tending to immorality and thieving. Their economic instincts were violated by the sight of good money

being wasted on play-going; they traced its disturbing effects upon their prentices; and noted how the processions of the players interfered with traffic. These causes of dislike, along with the fear of fire and above all of the plague, led them to restrict play-acting as much as possible. Again and again in time of the plague it was prohibited within London. But in spite of all these difficulties the fashion grew. The Court and Privy Council encouraged it, even in defiance of the London Corporation. And by the time that Shakespeare left school there were at least half a dozen places within the City where plays were constantly performed. Some at least of these were the courtyards of inns, fitted up temporarily or permanently for the purpose. From 1572 dates the first use of the word *theatre* in its modern sense. In 1575 a compromise was effected with the Common Council, by which it was provided that performances should be permitted in public play-houses within the City when the death-rate was below 50 a week, subject to the requirement of a license and the contribution by the owners of the houses of half the profits towards the relief of the poor. The restraints of the City Council upon acting within the City led to the erection in 1576 of two play-houses 'in the Fields' just outside its limits. These were *The Theatre* and *The Curtain*, both North-east of the City. The former became the head-quarters of the Earl of Leicester's Company, the latter of that of the Lord Admiral. Opposition however still followed the players. In 1579 broke out a pamphlet-war concerning the influence of the

stage, in which the attack was led by Stephen Gosson, who had been a dramatist himself. The Common Council continued to put every possible hindrance in the way of theatrical development, and even the Privy Council found it necessary at times to adopt repressive measures. The two Companies above mentioned however maintained their position. They were able to secure freedom for the practice of their art on the ground that their competence was necessary for the entertainment of the Queen. Shakespeare may perhaps, as it has been suggested, have been connected at times with other Companies, but it is with the Company of which the Earl of Leicester, Lord Strange and the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Hunsdon, were successively patrons, the Company of *The Theatre*, that he was mainly associated. The reputation of this Company was higher than that of any other. Besides Shakespeare, it contained Richard Burbage, the great tragedian, and William Kempe, the great comedian of the day. In 1596 *The Theatre* was closed. Burbage bought a building at Blackfriars which he transformed into a play-house, but when the *Globe* was finished in 1598-9, the Company made that its head-quarters. This was on the south side of the river, outside the jurisdiction of the City authorities. It stood in a neighbourhood of slums, but was easily accessible by boat up the Thames, then the great thoroughfare.

The Theatre.

The convenience of a site on the south bank of the river had been proved by *The Rose* and *The Swan*, erected in 1592 and 1596 respectively; and the migration of Burbage

was soon followed by that of the rival Company under Alleyn from *The Curtain* to *The Fortune*, in the same direction. All these were regarded as private theatres. *The Globe* was circular or octagonal in plan. In construction it followed the form of an inn-yard, rather than of the classical amphitheatre, the galleries being arranged in three storeys one over the other, like the different 'floors' of an inn. These were covered by a thatched roof, but the rest of the house was open to the sky. At one end of the floor was the stage, which was slightly raised upon timber supports. At its back was the actors' room. The whole was built of wood and lath and plaster, exposing it to the conflagration which destroyed it in 1613. The size of *The Fortune*, 80 feet square outside, 55 inside, may give us some indication of that of *The Globe*. The sign of the latter was Atlas supporting the globe, or 'Hercules and his load' (*Hamlet*, II. 2. 379).

Scenery.

As regards the scenery there is considerable controversy. Some, emphasizing certain satirical criticisms of Sidney and other Classicists, have maintained that Elizabethan theatres were almost devoid of stage property. They have drawn a picture of performances in which almost the only assistance to the spectator's imagination was a board on which was chalked the name of the place where the action was supposed to be passing. But this view can scarcely be defended. It is known that in the earlier years of Elizabeth's reign the Queen's Yeoman of the Revels kept an 'Acting-Box' in which were stored masks, dresses, and other apparatus for giving

verisimilitude to the Masques and pageants of the Court, and that, as occasion required, its contents were hired out to students and others all over the country. Indeed the house bought by Burbage at Blackfriars was this very store. It can scarcely be doubted that though no one was more conscious of its inadequacy than Shakespeare (see Prologue to *Henry V*), scenery not only fixed but movable was used as profusely as possible during the latter part at least of his connexion with the stage. There were certainly trap-doors. A survival of the old inn-yard days when the inn-window overlooked the stage was the existence of a smaller stage at the back of the stage proper and raised above it, on which might be presented interludes like that in *The Tempest* or from which actors might speak as from balconies or battlements. In front of the stage were curtains, drawn from the sides. The stage-floor was covered with rushes. Sometimes if a tragedy was enacted, the theatre or at least the stage was hung with black.

The Performance.

A performance was advertised beforehand by bills in the city, and during its continuance by a flag on the roof. Three 'flourishes' of a trumpet heralded the opening of the performance. If there was a prologue it was then delivered, convention requiring that the actor should assume for this purpose a black velvet cloak. The female parts were played by boys, no woman being allowed on the English stage till after the Restoration. Between the acts a band played, the clown jested, and the audience fell to eating, card-playing and

smoking. When Shakespeare first came to London it was customary for the clown or comedian to remain on the stage during the acts, and eke out the author's wit by his own extempore jokes or even converse with the audience, but with the growth of the drama this barbarism died out (see *Hamlet*, III. 2. 43). At the close, an epilogue might be delivered by one of the actors, and finally all knelt upon the stage and joined in a prayer for the monarch or patron of the Company.

Performances at first were allowed only on Sunday, and then only after even-song was over. But the former restriction soon became a dead letter. The Sunday plays were an abomination to the Puritans who called them 'the devil's services.' Later attempts to prevent by law Friday and Saturday performances also failed. But though performances soon became daily, they appear to have seldom commenced till the 'evening' service in the churches was over. Three o'clock seems to have been a usual time for commencing. In public play-houses no lights were allowed. In private theatres also the performance generally was from about three to five or six, for the crowds from the city would wish to return before dark; but we read of performances in these later in the evening, when the theatres were lit by candles or oil.

The Audience.

Almost every class was represented in the audiences. The young men of fashion were allowed seats upon the stage where they showed off their dress and manners to the world. Ladies came masked. Citizens were there.

with their wives. Their prentices made the theatres their resort too constantly for their masters' satisfaction. The taste for the theatre seemed an almost universal mania. The population of London then may be estimated at an eighth of a million; yet it has been calculated that in James I's reign it contained as many theatres as it does now when its population is almost forty times as large. It was stated that 'between March and July 1592, ten thousand people saw the First Part of Henry VI.' During Elizabeth's reign the prices of admission ranged from a penny to a shilling, but the maximum seems to have risen soon after. Sixpence seems to have been the usual price for the city respectability. Twopence admitted to the top gallery, and a penny to the floor, where 'the groundlings' stood as best they could, crowded in front of the stage. A continental visitor estimated a night's takings at £10 or £12, 'particularly if they act anything new, when people have to pay double.'

The Company.

Originally the players as we have seen were the 'servants' of some nobleman and must have been paid by him. The opponents of the stage reprobated the idea of making acting a 'trade,' but with the growth of its popularity the Companies would probably find in the custom of the public a more profitable source of income than in the generosity of their patron. Especially when a number of actors combined to build a theatre would the commercial side of their profession become marked.

This aspect of the matter cannot be better described than in the words of Miss Bateson (*Social England*,

III. 570) :—"The average daily expenditure on a dramatic performance has been estimated at forty-five shillings; a new play was known to cost £6 13*s.* 4*d.*, though a private theatre would be willing to give double that amount. The data concerning actors' salaries are not precise, but it appears that the takings were divided into shares and fractions of shares; the master-sharers or proprietors of the theatre got a certain proportion of shares, others three-quarter or half shares, and the poorest actors or hirelings about 6*s.* a week, according to Gosson's 'School of Abuse,' 1579. Malone estimated that a good actor might get £90 a year (an outside estimate). Sweet bully Bottom's 'Sixpence a day in *Pyramus* or nothing' was to be a pension for life, such as Preston got from the Queen for his acting in the play of *Dido*, at King's College, Cambridge."

From time to time these Companies went on tour. In 1601 it would seem that being excluded from any share in the Christmas festivities of the court, for their support of Essex' rising, and suffering from the competition of the child actors of the Chapels Royal, Shakespeare's company travelled extensively, even as far north, it has been argued, as Aberdeen. (*Hamlet*, II. 2. 343).

Censorship.

From the very first a strict censorship of plays was maintained. To the Master of the Revels fell this office, but in 1581 a clergyman was associated with him for the better prevention of offences against morality or religion. In 1603 was passed an Act to prevent the abuses of

players, aimed against the profanity and personalities which were invading the stage. The Puritans complained with reason of the attacks upon them in the plays of the period—Shakespeare's are a remarkable exception—and continued their censures of play-going and play-acting. The *Histriomastix* of William Prynne (1633) and the closing of theatres under the Commonwealth may be regarded as expressions of the same Puritan spirit which prompted the Common Council of Elizabeth's days to oppose the extension of playing in London.

SHAKESPEARIAN CRITICISM.

Shakespearian Criticism is of two kinds—textual and literary. These have often, perhaps usually, overlapped, but in this short sketch it may be convenient to treat them separately.

I.—Textual.

The textual criticism may be dealt with first. The story of the text of Shakespeare begins with the QUARTOS. These were editions of single plays in quarto form. Seventeen plays were thus produced before any collected edition was published. The character of these *Quartos* as they were called is uncertain. Some of them appear to have been printed from the poet's own manuscripts. Some are manifestly very imperfect, and would seem to be based on the notes of some spectator, eked out from surreptitious perusal of the prompter's copy or of some of the actors' parts. It has even been suggested that the note-taker's gaps were supplied by some

The Quartos.

hired versifier, but this is doubtful. In some cases (e.g., *Hamlet*) it seems as if a publisher after pirating a play came to terms with the Company and with their assistance issued a revised edition. Probably after 1600 the poet himself sanctioned the publication of none of his plays, and from about 1604-5 it would seem that his Company exercised special care to prevent their monopoly of them from being invaded. For few new plays after that date appeared in Quarto. Some of those already published in this form however passed through edition after edition, even after the official collection had appeared. Thus between 1597 and 1634 eight Quarto editions of *King Richard III* saw the light; and Quartos of *The Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear* appeared as late as 1652 and 1655 respectively.

The Folios.

In 1623, in order as they said 'to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive as was our Shakespeare,' John Heminge and Henry Condell, two members of the Company to which he had belonged, published a collection of 36 of his plays—all those now usually included among his works except *Pericles*. This from its form is known as the FIRST FOLIO. It was dedicated to the Earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, who had shown their high appreciation of the plays as acted. The editors denounce earlier editions—the Quartos—as 'stolen and surreptitious copies maimed and deformed by the frauds of injurious impostors that exposed them,' but in some cases they follow the text of the Quartos. This is the most important edition of the plays. The SECOND

FOLIO was published in 1632 and was a reprint with some improvements and some misprints of the *First*. The THIRD FOLIO followed in 1663 and 1664. In this *Pericles*, and six other plays, wrongly attributed to Shakespeare, found room. The FOURTH FOLIO, published in 1685, followed the Third with some alterations for the better or for the worse.

Modern Editions.

With the publication in 1709 by the dramatist Nicholas Rowe of his edition of Shakespeare's plays for popular reading began the long series of emendatory editions. Unfortunately he based his text on the Fourth Folio which was in many respects the worst, but he removed some of its corruptions and made some sensible conjectures. His object was to make Shakespeare better known, by presenting to the public a fair text of the plays and a sketch of his life. To compare the old editions and publish a critical edition of the text was beyond his aim.

This was the work which Pope claimed to have don (1725). He first collated the Folios and the Quartos Painstaking research was not Pope's forte, and his merit lies rather in the idea than in its realisation. His treatment of the Quartos was arbitrary. He included or omitted their readings according to his own judgment of what was appropriate. He modernised and 'emended' without restraint, applying his own 'correct' theories of language and versification to Shakespeare's lines.

Pope thus left to others the real foundation of a critical school of Shakespearian students. His place

was taken by Louis Theobald, who, having shown in his *Shakespeare Restored* (1726) how far Pope's work differed from his professions, published in 1733 his own epoch-making edition of Shakespeare. He brought to his task great industry, acute insight, and a considerable knowledge of the history of the English language and of Elizabethan literature. He set himself to treat Shakespeare as if he were a 'corrupt classic,' to collate the early copies of the plays, and to restore therefrom the original text. Making the First Folio and the Quartos his main authorities, he professed to make no conjecture except where they could be shown to be corrupt. If too often he satisfied himself too easily of their corruptness, his conjectures are always acute and in many instances have been universally adopted.

Sir Thomas Hanmer the next editor (1744) was an amateur who contributed little but some fanciful conjectures to the growing study. And Bishop Warburton (1747) was prevented by his innate arrogance from adding to it anything of value but the influence of his reputation as (would-be) Dictator of the Literary World. Dr. Johnson (1756—1765) as might have been expected followed so far as his physical defects permitted him the methods of Theobald, though his conservative instincts led him—often with success—to defend many original readings which that brilliant conjecturer had treated as corrupt.

A great step forward is marked by the next name on the list of editors—Edward Capell. From 1745 onwards he worked at his task, making no sign till in

1768 he produced his Text of the plays, which was followed in 1774 and (after his death) in 1783 by a wealth of comment and illustration. He devoted himself especially to the Quartos, seeing in them surreptitious copies of genuine manuscripts. All of them he collated, and upon them he based his text. Hitherto whatever emendations they might introduce, all the editors had made the text of Rowe their starting-point. Capell set the example of going back to the original copies for this. He first traced the relation of the Folios to the Quartos. He, too, first collected and published any of the books from which Shakespeare derived his plots and other writings which influenced his work. And he, too, was the first to set forth the principles of the versification of Shakespeare, thus checking the growth of such conjectural emendation as Pope's metrical canons had led him to adopt.

Almost all subsequent textual criticism of Shakespeare has been on the lines laid down by Theobald and Capell. Capell's ideas were borrowed by George Steevens, who reprinted twenty of the Quartos and in collaboration with Johnson published in 1773 an edition which was for long regarded as the standard. But when Steevens in 1793 published his own edition he denounced 'servile and timid adherence to the ancient copies' and indulged in a license of alteration which contrasted strangely with his earlier conservatism.

A less brilliant but equally industrious and more trustworthy critic was Edward Malone. Besides setting the example of attempting to ascertain the chronology of the plays and confuting an outrageous attempt

by a certain W. H. Ireland to foist upon the literary world as Shakespeare's a body of forgeries, Malone did much to advance the textual criticism of his author. While insisting on the importance of the Quartos, he defined more clearly the relations of the Folios to one another, made better use of the First Folio than any previous editor, and worked out a text (1790) superior to any yet attained. The Variorum Edition of 1821, which, though published after his death by his friend Boswell, is practically Malone's work compiled from many sources, still retains its value despite the labours of so many scholars during seventy years.

Throughout this century the work of criticism has continued, but without any feature that calls for special remark. The chief English editors have been Chalmers (1805), Singer (1826), Knight (1843), Collier (1844 and 1853), Dyce (1857), Staunton (1860), Marsh (1864), Halliwell (1865), Wordsworth (1883), and Clark and Wright to whom we owe the splendid Cambridge Edition of thirty years ago (revised lately); and the popular *Globe* Edition (1874). Bowdler by his Family Edition (1818) added a new word to our language—*bowdlerise*, to expurgate. The Cambridge Editions deservedly hold the highest rank.

In America, Grant White (1860), Hudson (1857 and 1881) and Rolfe (1884) have contributed emendations more or less happy, while Mr. Furness has set before himself the laudable ambition of superseding the work of Malone by the gradual production of all the plays in a 'New Variorum Shakespeare.' The text of Professor Delius, a German worshipper of Shakespeare

(1865), has not unjustly been selected for perhaps the most widely used popular edition of the poet's works —the Leopold Shakspere (1877).

Despite all that has been done by these and other scholars, the text of Shakespeare still presents many a *crux*. Its peculiar history, and the joy of tracking a mind like that of Shakespeare's even in the smallest detail will probably render the textual criticism of his plays a pursuit attractive and stimulating to scholars as long as the English language lasts.

II.—Literary.

The story of the literary criticism of Shakespeare is very largely that of the victory of appreciation over the restraints of a mistaken science. From the very first the poet's power was felt; his plays however defied the established canons of dramatic art. Thus it was with Shakespeare as it has been with certain painters—he charmed critics in spite of their 'culture.'

Contemporary appreciation of Shakespeare.

In his own age thought was free. Elizabethan literature was one spontaneous outburst of the emotions or thought, overflowing the carefully fixed limits of pedantry. As poets sang because they could not but sing, so hearers and readers appreciated without asking themselves whether by the canons of art they ought to. The idea that in his own day Shakespeare was neglected is on the surface of it false. No playwright attained to so considerable a fortune; of no other were the plays so often published; the few notes extant on the matter

show that their representations were largely attended; the praise of writers like Jonson is on record. If, as would naturally happen, the changing fashions of the stage diminished the frequency with which his plays were performed in the generation after his death, we know that these performances found favour with cultured men as far apart as Charles I and John Milton; and there is proof that as literature the plays were gaining a recognised rank as classics. All Puritans had not Milton's tastes, and during the Puritan rule Shakespeare with other dramatists passed into neglect. But with Charles II Shakespeare, too, returned, and the frequent references in the diaries of the time to performances of his plays show that the theatrical world of the Restoration period recognised his genius and the attractiveness of his name. To suit the debased tastes or the pretentious criticism of the age his plays might be altered or recast, but even this is a tribute to the power of the originals. It is scarcely necessary to state that from that time to this, Shakespeare's attraction for the thoughtful has known no cessation. To play the leading parts of Shakespeare has ever been regarded as the crown of an actor's art. The traditional Shakespeare-worship of the stage has been handed down through a chain of consummate tragedians and comedians—Betterton, Wilks, Macklin, Garrick, Kemble, Mrs. Siddons, Kean, and Macready—to our own contemporaries, Irving in England, Edwin Booth in America, Salvini in Italy. Theatrical representation

The Restoration.

Shakespeare on the Stage.

has however been but an inadequate criterion of the place of Shakespeare in the esteem of men. Theatrical managers have sometimes complained that Shakespeare spells ruin, and there are obvious reasons in the absence from Shakespearian revivals of the novelty and sensation so dear to the majority of habitual theatre-goers, and in the large expenditure requisite for worthily mounting and presenting his master-pieces why this has often been the case. On the one hand, those of low tastes want something new; on the other, the cultured are exacting when a Shakespearian play is produced.

Shakespeare as Literature.

But even when Shakespeare has been least popular on the stage he has been the companion and guide of the thoughtful and cultured. To-day the reverence for him is greater than ever. The Puritan distaste for the drama which still is strong in the middle classes of England makes an exception in his favour. Indeed to that element in English society perhaps above all is Shakespeare a name to conjure with.

The thoughtful at least of the community therefore may be said to have come, generation after generation, under the master's spell.

They have not been allowed however to admire without justifying their admiration.

The French School of Criticism.

If Shakespeare's contemporaries did not ask themselves whether a striking play was scientific or not, their grand-children did. With the Restoration came in the literary criticism of the France of Louis XIV,

a belated revival of the critical ideas of Aristotle and Horace. The French dramas were imitations of those of Seneca. The French critics insisted that every play must observe the unities of time and place and action prescribed by Aristotle, and in other points conform to classical usage. France at that time set the tone for Europe, and many English critics fell into the errors of their French guides. Plays so popular as Shakespeare's could not hope to escape critical examination. They were found to be conspicuous offenders against dramatic correctness. Their emotional effects were unconventional; they aimed less at the rhetorical than at a representation of actual life; their workmanship as regards detail was often careless. They disregarded the unities; they most irregularly combined tragedy and comedy; and they did not deal out poetical justice. Critics of the French School could only see in the popularity of Shakespeare a glaring instance of the perversity of popular ignorance—the most flagrant illustration of what is now called Philistinism. To such an extreme did this feeling carry some that they came to see no good points in Shakespeare at all.

A typical critic of this school was Thomas Rymer (1678) regarded as the first critic of his day. He saw nothing but the incoherent ravings of a turned brain in Shakespeare's tragedies. *Othello* which he called the best of them he described as 'a bloody farce, without salt or savour.' Even Portia was 'but one remove from a natural.'

More representative however of English culture was glorious John' Dryden. For the genius of Shake-

speare he had profound reverence. He recognised in him 'the largest and most comprehensive soul of all modern and perhaps ancient poets.' 'When he describes anything you more than see it, you feel it too.' He extols his characterisation as unequalled. To Dryden Shakespeare is the incomparable poet. Yet he can scarcely forgive him for his breach of the unities. This brings all Shakespeare's Historical Plays under his ban. He finds fault with his language, accusing him of obscurity and bombast, and laments his use of blank verse instead of rhyme.

Rowe, in his Preface to his edition of Shakespeare, treats his departures from the rules of dramatic art as *defects*, for which excuse however may be made on the ground that he was a genius who owed nothing to art, everything to nature, and that he lived in a rude and ignorant age.

Judged by some of his sayings Pope would deserve high credit as the pioneer of a better era in Shakespearian criticism. 'Shakespeare,' said he, 'is not so much an imitator as an instrument of Nature.' He could even defend his breach of the unities. 'To judge of Shakespeare by Aristotle's rules is like trying a man by the laws of one country who acted under those of another.' But he felt it necessary to offer for much that Shakespeare had written the excuse that it was written to hit the low taste of his audiences. His tragedy he dismisses as unnatural, and his comedy he declares to be marred by buffoonery. Pope's friend Warburton expressed in his own vehement style his disapproval of Shakespeare's departure from classical

ideals, especially in the mingling of comic scenes with tragedy.

This school found its climax in Voltaire, the great French littérateur, who during his stay in England, from 1726 to 1729, made himself well acquainted with the Elizabethan drama. His admiration of Shakespeare's genius did much to make his works known on the continent. His unbiassed opinion appears in a preface to his play of *Brutus*. Referring to Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*, he criticises its 'barbarous irregularities,' but expresses his surprise that 'there are not more in a work written in an age of ignorance by one who did not even know Latin and had only his own genius to guide him.' The bringing upon the stage of crowds of artisans and plebeians jarred upon his French taste, and Shakespeare's love scenes seemed to him to border sometimes on debauchery. But when his introduction of Shakespeare to the Parisian world of letters led to the rise of a school of Shakespearian dramatists in France, Voltaire turned upon it for its want of discrimination, denounced Shakespeare's ignorance of dramatic rules and his vulgarity, and described his works as springing from 'the imagination of a drunken savage.'

Johnson.

But the French school was losing its hold of the public. Addison and Steele and their friends had already given expression to a more liberal admiration of Shakespeare. And not the least of the claims of Dr. Johnson to the rank he holds in the annals of literature is the power and success with which he defended Shakespeare's neglect

of the unities of time and place. 'Since the spectators are always in their senses and know from the first act to the last that the stage is only a stage,' since they are called on consciously to exercise their imagination throughout, since at one time they are bidden to imagine themselves in 'the palace of the Ptolemies,' why may they not half an hour after image themselves at Actium? Similarly his common sense swept away the fallacy that Shakespeare, because he was a genius, owed nothing to training and study. He rightly defended Shakespeare's mixture of comic and tragic scenes by the example of life itself. Yet he found fault with Shakespeare for neglecting poetic justice, though observation might have shown him that Shakespeare here also was not untrue to life. Johnson's influence in the world of letters established the supremacy of Shakespeare beyond dispute. From his day to ours the chorus of appreciation has been constantly growing in power. No doubt much of the eulogy passed upon the poet's work has been conventional and indiscriminate. But studied as that work has been in almost every aspect by competent critics, it has evoked the praise of unapproached and unapproachable excellence in almost all its features.

The New Criticism.

An early example of these Shakespearian studies is the examination of Shakespeare's use of the 'Praeternatural' by Mrs. Montagu, a follower of Johnson (1769). The analysis of Shakespeare's characters—now so well recognised a part of Shakespearian criticism—may be said to have really begun with Morgann's *Essay on*

Falstaff (1777). William Richardson (1797), Mrs. Jameson (1832), Lady Martin (1885), and Gervinus (trans. 1863) have each in their day contributed to this department.

At the beginning of this century arose in England a group of Shakespearian students who gave a new meaning to criticism. With them it became the sympathetic appreciation of an author, discovering his meaning, revealing his thoughts, and unfolding his ideas. Critics of this kind are less judges of a poet than guides to his mind; and under their leading readers find ever new beauty in their author. At the head of this group was Coleridge, but scarcely less stimulating was the influence of Hazlitt and Lamb.

Goethe's examination of *Hamlet* marks an epoch. It practically inaugurated the psychological study of Shakespeare, and it created the Shakespeare-mania, as it has been called, in Germany.

English criticism during the last quarter-century has been mainly directed to the determination of the order of the plays, and as a result the tracing of the development of Shakespeare's mind and genius. Fleay, Furnivall and Dowden are perhaps the chief workers in this field.

The Art of Shakespeare.

Just lately the criticism of Shakespeare's technique has revived. But the wheel has come full circle since the days of Rymer and Pope. Till recently even the most ardent Shakespearians have been wont to speak somewhat apologetically of the poet's plots. Now, however, we are bidden by R. G. Moulton and his followers

to see in Shakespeare the very perfection of dramatic art. Whatever praise we may accord to Shakespeare's sense of music or imagination or character-drawing, our highest eulogy must be reserved for the skill with which he links together his incidents, develops his plots, and gives to each and every feature its appropriate light and shade and setting. And so Shakespeare has become the standard of dramatic art and the Aristotelian canons by which two centuries ago he was rashly tested and ignorantly condemned have passed away into scarcely deserved contempt.

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

INTRODUCTION.

COMEDY is the form of drama of which the aim and purpose is to produce the pleasures of the ludicrous. Its sphere is the laughable. It plays with every form of pleasantry and endeavours to evoke every manner of mirth. More especially it exhibits the weaknesses and follies of men; the errors and mistakes, the vanities and delusions, the idiosyncrasies and humours, the inconsistencies, whimsicalities and absurdities of common life; all such elements of grotesqueness, or oddity, or impropriety as on the one hand can minister to amusement, and on the other hand may by the mere fact of their portraiture receive correction and reformation. The laughter of Comedy is good-humoured and does not permit the vituperation and malignant censure of Satire; it excludes personalities. And by artistic requirement it avoids caricature; or that handling of peculiarities beyond the bounds of probability which is the characteristic of the lighter form of amusement known as Farce. Comedy is the contrast of Tragedy which deals not with human nature as a whole, but with the great and the venerable in the hour of misfortune and calamity, appealing to and (as Aristotle indicated) disciplining the emotions of pity and fear. Both these great forms were creations of the genius of Greece, and were developed from the rude recitations or songs that formed part of the

festivities in honour of Dionysus. Comedy in Greece became classical in three successive forms, the Old, the Middle and the New. The first was defaced by the element of political satire; the others approximated to the modern type. It is, however, one of the greatest of literary regrets that the works of Menander, the brilliant master of the New Comedy, were allowed to perish; except that some of his plays were reproduced at Rome, from the pens of Plautus and Terence, and through this medium have exercised an influence on the modern drama. English Comedy from its arrival, out of the earlier Interludes, at maturity in the plays of Lyly and Greene, the elder contemporaries of Shakespeare, has assumed various types according to the elements (characterisation, incident, manners) and according to the designs (realistic or imaginative) that have predominated. Elizabethan Comedy culminated in Ben Jonson, Shakespeare's younger contemporary, in the type known as the Comedy of Humour, of which the main object was to represent the humours, eccentricities or ruling passions by which the characters were supposed to be impelled. After the Restoration, in the latter years of Charles II, Comedy again flashed into brilliance, and for rather less than a generation shone or sparkled. In this period, while the study of character was not neglected and some of the playwrights laboured at an endless portraiture of types, the general object of the dramatists was to portray contemporary London life. Hence the Restoration Comedy is known as the Comedy of Manners. In the reigns of George I and George II, Comedy, fol-

lowing the bent of national thought at a time when ethical discussion everywhere prevailed, became what was called *sentimental*; that is to say, it abounded in maxims and moral sentiments and was characterised by affectation of feeling and didactic purpose. At the same time it excluded the elements of low life, in which the comic is so much more easily found, and claimed to be "genteel." Goldsmith endeavoured to restore "nature and humour." He devoted his powers to careful characterisation and the furnishing of comic incidents; while another Irishman, the orator Sheridan, brought to the art the treasures of his youthful wit, and re-introduced dialogue as brilliant and sparkling as had flowed from the pen of Congreve. With him closed the Comedy that belongs alike to the drama and literature.

Shakespeare stands immediately after Lyly and Greene, from both of whom he was a learner, and immediately before Jonson and his family. He created a type of his own. And if he had died, like Byron or Burns, at the age of thirty-six or thirty-seven, his comedies, rather than his histories or his poems, would have been the central pillar of his fame; and on the ground of these we would have claimed for him an equality of genius with Moliere in the thin front line of the world's dramatists. What distinguishes Shakespeare's comedies from the types that have followed is that his are not so much realistic studies of life as creations of a fertile and fine imagination. Shakespeare was no mere imitative sketcher of manners or oddities, but a poet of inventive genius and musical

speech, and it is thus that we see the story of the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* enlivened with the agency of spirits and the manners of Fairy Land. It is of the comedies that Milton wrote in the *L'Allegro*—

> Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
> Warble his native woodnotes wild.

These lines deemed 'strangely inadequate' by our half-educated brood of inadequate critics are the final description of the Shakespeare of the Comedies. 'Fancy's child' means exactly the same as Shakespeare's own phrase—imagination all compact. Fancy was the seventeenth century name for the poetic imagination; and to be 'fancy's child' is to have a soul derived from the Muse and nurtured at her wells of inspiration. The epithet 'wild' means possessing the charm of nature; and 'sweetest' is descriptive not only of ease and melody in versification, of exquisite beauty in the description of scenery and of life, of dainty delights in the lyrical language of emotion, of feasts of fancy in imagery and incident; it is above all descriptive of that geniality of disposition, that blandness and mildness (as Tennyson put it) which in the exercise of matchless wit absolutely abstained from the bitterness of satire or the wounds of animosity, and has given us a picture-gallery of characters every one of which it is a pleasure to be acquainted with.

The position of Shakespeare may be described by saying that, while Ben Jonson inaugurated the classical type, he is the last great representative of the romantic age. The terms, however, are not to be

understood too narrowly. The classical school of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries pursued an aim that may be described either as the imitation of the ancients or the establishment of correctness of form. Romantic authors while they embodied something of the ideas and spirit of the earlier Romance epoch, yet drew their materials from all sources and refused to allow their method or their imagination to be trammelled. Thus in Shakespeare, as in Spenser, various elements, native and derived, were blended. The Comedies of Lyly, which were the favourites of the Court when Shakespeare came up to London, and which, as is evident, he carefully studied, were founded on classic mythology. Shakespeare dived into Greek or Roman story and into Italian fable or fiction, while he also studied Teutonic legend and folk-lore. All came forth from his fiery brain fused in the unity of artistic thought and shaped in marvellous moulds of harmony and beauty.

Four comedies, as we have them, are recognised as belonging to the period of Shakespeare's undeveloped art. The first of these (*Love's Labour's Lost*) is the slightest and youthfullest, a clever comedy of gay wit and pointed dialogue in which everything artificial in thought, or life, or language is disdained. Next is the *Comedy of Errors*, his sole play derived from the Latin stage, a mirthful comedy of incidents and situations, of mistakes founded on the resemblances of twins in which the farcical is well nigh reached. The *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, which, in its present form, must be placed fourth in the list, is the first example of

more regular comedy and of Shakespeare's characteristic style. It contains a more dramatic fable, a romantic love-story; and it begins, largely in pairs or foils, the method of characterisation which in the *Merchant of Venice* and subsequent plays was more masterfully carried out. The remaining one is the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*. Four or five years later Shakespeare produced the group of Comedies which Dowden defines as "joyous, refined, romantic;" while two or three years thereafter it is found that even the mirth of our dramatist is in some degree clouded and gloomy.

The *Midsummer-Night's Dream* is a comedy that refuses to be labelled with a descriptive name. It is frequently said to be not a comedy, but a masque. This statement, however, is not to be accepted too literally. It is probably true that the play was either originally written or afterwards adapted for performance at a gorgeous marriage festivity, and, thus far, that it served the purpose for which mainly masques were written. But the only masque-like elements are the representations of the Fairies, and these were by no means outside the province of the Romantic Comedy. No such elaborate drama had ever been designed or prepared for a masque. That form of dramatic device, as it was practised before the time of Jonson and King James contained but slight literary elements. It is true, however, that in the reign of James it was to the masques that the exhibition of the supernatural was relegated. It was essential to the idea of these phantasmagoria of colour and architecture,

of music and dancing, of elaborate disguises, and of the gorgeous display of apparel and ornament, that the characters should be partially drawn from the supernatural world of myth and fancy; that gods and goddesses, nymphs and fairies, river-divinities and personified abstractions, should be magically introduced to dazzle the beholders; and above all, if the celebration was at a marriage, that Hymen should be present revelling in his reign. These later masques show how deeply-rooted in the minds of educated men at the close of Elizabeth's day was this delight in the exhibition of the supernatural. We readily understand how Shakespeare in his era of experiment made one effort to blend fairy with mortal life; and how appropriate the attempt would seem if the drama was to be acted before queen and nobles at a splendid wedding in the highest rank of life. And Shakespeare's own satisfaction may be guessed from his recurrence to similar methods in the *Tempest* at the close. But both the *Dream* and the *Tempest* are to be classed not as masques, but as Romantic Comedies into which their author has infused more of the pure essence of poetry than the practice of the stage could ordinarily sustain.

The title of the play is a playful description of it as a work not founded on concrete reality, but evolved from sportive imagination. As a *dream* it is a product of imagination or of fancy; as adapted to the conception of a *Midsummer's Night*, it is a wild, romantic, fantastic composition in which elements of amusement and caprice, or of witchcraft and fairy machination,

or of delusion verging on madness, may be supposed to predominate. The metaphor of a 'dream,' as descriptive of an effort or process of imagination, has been employed in all ages; sometimes to describe the fantastic, sometimes the ideal, sometimes simply the imaginary. Midsummer is in England the latter half of June, and Midsummer Night was in particular the night of the 24th June, the season approximately of the summer solstice, or of the day's maximum length—a date which had been from time immemorial celebrated with abundance of festive sport. In all such festivities superstition (as we now describe the relics of ancient heathenism) played its part; and the excess of gaiety combined with the influences of hot weather (the so-called dog-days) and animistic beliefs (ghost-visions and fairy-lore) gave rise to the state of mind indicated in the phrase "midsummer madness." Shakespeare's play is not to be assigned to the season of midsummer (as if it had been written for and first acted at this particular date) any more than his *Twelfth Night* is to be regarded as a play of the 12th January; in each case it is the spirit or distinguishing character of these seasons that the poet endeavours to lay hold of and to embody in a drama which can be acted at any time in any land or age. Knowing this we have to investigate and exhibit the *idea* or *motive* of the play. What is this idea? What is the central and predominating thought that binds into a unity of art and knowledge all the apparently incoherent elements and aspects of this fantastic composition? What is the poet's aim or purpose bear-

ing on Shakespeare's distinctive and unrivalled work in literature, viz., the exhibition, the portraiture and the interpretation of human life? What conceptions of character and what designs in the development thereof have been put into dramatic and poetic shape in this dream-like creation of the poet's mind? This question, the varied complications of the plot and the very fulness and fertility of the poet's fancy render not simple. To give an approximate answer it will be well to consider not only the structure and sentiments of the play, but also its relation to the period of the poet's life when it was written, and at the same time to recall the other plays or poems that were produced when the same circle of ideas held sway in his mind. It is on this latter account, and not as a mere point of history, that the question of the date is of essential importance.

The *date* is with considerable probability assigned to the winter of 1594-95. This is subject to the qualification that there may have been an earlier form (1592 or 1593) and also a later textual revision. These conditions belong to nearly all Shakespeare's earlier plays. That *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* was a well-known play in 1598 is proved by the fact that it is one of the six of Shakespeare's comedies mentioned by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia* published in that year. The final revision, however, may have taken place any time before 1600, the year of the quarto publications. The date given above is slightly confirmed by (1) the state of weather described in Titania's speech (Act II, Sc. I) which corresponds to the summer of 1594, and (2) the

reference to the lion frightening the ladies (Act I, Sc. II) which recalls such terror in connection with the royal baptism, 30th August 1594. Other references are less certain and determinative. "The thrice-three Muses mourning for the death of learning late deceased in beggary" is probably an allusion (the expression being suggested by Spenser's *Tears of the Muses*, 1591) to the death of Greene (Sep. 1592), and suggests an edition earlier than 1594, while the line "the summer still doth tend upon my State" (III. i. 150) is supposed to describe the good weather of 1592 for which the Fairy Queen claims credit. A play, *Doctor Doddypoll*, believed to have been in existence in 1596, contains the line "Hanging on every leaf an orient pearl" which is supposed to be based on II. i. 15, but the argument is by no means conclusive. These minor indications are of value as confirming the general argument from matter and style—an argument not easily expressed in scholastic form and not readily appreciated except by the trained critic, but of which the study is essential to a knowledge of the mind of Shakespeare.

It is the fashion of the criticism of to-day to divide Shakespeare's life into periods, to find in each its characteristic quality, and to trace through the whole growth and development or change. Every life has its periods and stages of development, but this general truth is specially manifest in the case of Shakespeare. He went to town from the country at about the age of twenty-three with little endowment except strong active talent, and the limited knowledge of

life which his eager youth at Stratford had brought him. In London he at once became familiar with the products and experiences of the stage at a time when the stage was a general enthusiasm; he sat at the feet of one dramatist after another and became familiar with all the literature of the time; he obtained entrance into all societies and formed his chief friendship with a gifted young nobleman; he studied life in every aspect, public and private, and became the exponent of its every phase. Under such multitudinous influences and with plastic versatile genius his life was necessarily a life of progress, continuous in its development yet at one period widely separated from its condition at another. A division into three or four periods is therefore a matter of convenience rather than of exactitude, like the division of the year into seasons.

The quarter of a century of Shakespeare's literary life is thus divisible into four periods of about six or seven years each. By the last, his tranquil autumn, the characteristic works are the *Tempest, Cymbeline* and the *Winter's Tale*, usually described as Romantic Plays. The third period, the later summer (1601–1608), is the period of the great tragedies which are the supreme dramatic masterpieces of the human mind. Along with these are some comedies of a graver cast than any that preceded. Previous and preparatory to this was the second period or early summer, the septennate dating from the autumn of 1594, a period of marvellous activity in which Shakespeare produced the histories that have instructed and the

comedies that have delighted all subsequent generations of Englishmen; a period of joyous activity and of constant study in which, both from the page of history and the commerce of men, the poet was educated and ripened so as to be able to create the profounder representations of soul and spiritual life that belong to the next seven years. Similarly there was preliminary and preparatory to the second period, an earlier period of tentative endeavour which may be called the poet's spring-tide. During this period he collaborated with other dramatists; and wrote poems, showing in a marvellous degree vivacity of imagination and ease of versification. He was primarily a poet rather than a dramatist, but to be a dramatist was his study— a dramatist or playwright in the English sense of the time, not yet concerned with abiding forms of art, with the boundary lines of comedy, or tragedy, or other artistic form, but intent primarily on producing varied amusement for a generation that passionately craved it and eager to pour into the accepted moulds all the elements that interested men, grief and joy and love and ambition, fairy tale and classic myth, witty dialogue and startling incident and humorous adventure and calamitous destiny—the elements of Comedy and Farce, and Masque, and of History and Tragedy often all blended in one drama.

The Summer of 1594 marks the period from which to date Shakespeare's career of pre-eminence. The publication of *Lucrece* established his reputation as a poet. Rival dramatists were dead or silent and to him

had passed the mantle of the greatest. The death of Lord Derby in April was followed in June by the reconstruction of his company as the Lord Chamberlain's; Shakespeare becoming a leading manager and the chief purveyor of plays. Henceforward, with serene self-consciousness he proceeded to build the fabric of his fame. Our opinion is that when in the autumn of 1594 he entered into new relations with his reconstructed company, his first work was to re-edit the *Errors* and rewrite the *Dream* and that thereafter he proceeded to Italian themes, recasting the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Romeo and Juliet*, and following up these with the *Merchant of Venice*; at the same time going back to earlier English history, reshaping the play of *King John* and writing *Richard II* which is the prelude to the *Henry IV* and *V* trilogy. Many minor points connect these plays, showing them to have been simultaneously in the poet's mind; but it has been especially observed that in the general features of literary style, three of them (though diverse in theme and purpose, a comedy, a tragedy and a history), viz., the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard II* bear to each other a very close alliance. In them a large proportion of the lines are in rhyming couplets; there is more, too, of a lyrical element than in, perhaps, any other of Shakespeare's plays. They seem written in the ecstasy of youth yet with the full powers of manhood. Mr. Chambers says: "they are dramatic poems rather than dramas and appear to point to an attempt, a transient attempt, on the part of the poet to find dramatic value in

painting the phases of emotion rather than the development of character." Of these the closer kinship is between the comedy and the tragedy, both of which have love as their theme and give expression to the keenest intensity of emotion, while the description of Queen Mab in the tragedy corresponds with the account of fairy beliefs in the comedy, and the fate of *Romeo and Juliet* resembles that of Pyramus and Thisbe. Verbal resemblances are numerous; and with regard to structure it is notable that in both the troubled love-story is encased in a framework of a totally different kind. But the deeper feeling and significance of the tragedy points to it as the later. For the dates there is intricate evidence of various kinds which cannot here be given.

The theme of the play is Love. This is the subject-matter of the greater part of Shakespeare's early work. His mind was full of it. He could write on it in its every aspect with ease and endless fertility. Hence a succession of plays and poems in which the subject is treated, now in similar, now in contrasted forms, with all the variety of a kaleidoscopic picture. The plays usually recognised as love plays are *Love's Labour's Lost, Two Gentlemen of Verona, All's Well that Ends Well, A Midsummer-Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*. It is disputed whether *All's Well* or *Much Ado*, both of which are later recasts of earlier plays, is the enlargement of the original *Love's Labour's Won*. The *Jealous Comedy* supposed to be absorbed in the *Merry Wives* was a sketch of kindred character. To these plays are to be added the Poems and Sonnets.

But here the distinctive character of the poet is to be noted. He paints love but not as a lover. He portrays votaries of love but none of them is himself. He had had his days of loving, not highly fortunate ones; his mind is still full of the subject; it enters into his every poetic imagination. Nevertheless he has got beyond its power. He has become a practical man with a firm hold of life, with a sense of social advantages and a keen interest in national affairs, not without elements of worldly ambition. Accordingly while he treats of love it is as the critic, the satirist and the humourist thereof.

Here as elsewhere the poet is true to Nature. Schools of poetry tend to become artificial, and every original poet has in some measure to break from the methods of his predecessors. In the centuries preceding Shakespeare Love and War were the main themes of verse. Down to our Civil War it was incumbent on all aspirants to the honours of the Muses to dedicate songs or sonnets to some Mistress whom they honoured with their affection or crowned with their admiration. Often the heroine of such poetry was an imaginary person, or one imaginarily loved, or it might be a child as was the Geraldine of Surrey. Such love poetry was necessarily artificial, and to Shakespeare a matter of sport or scorn (see *e.g.*, Sonnet 130). Again, the better poets had simply glorified love. They had devoted their art to painting its beauty, its tenderness, its refining and elevating power. Shakespeare sought rather to paint the truth of life in all his work, to "hold the mirror up to nature," and to prove that in

the regions of reality there is ample scope for poetry. No one, indeed, has more grandly described the unalterable fidelity (Sonnet 116) of genuine love, yet he seems to have taken an extreme view of the waywardness, the perversity and the mischance of love in its ordinary experience. 'Is love a tender thing,' Romeo asks, and the answer is: "it is too rough, too rude, too boisterous, and it pricks like thorn." The course of true love, he tells us in this play, never did run smooth. Happy lovers are parted by war or plague or other cause of premature death. They that are left together are the unhappy ones who find their lives blighted by the consequences of disparity in rank or age, or by the absence of a primary affection.

But the theme of the play is rather the arbitrariness or unreasonable caprice that belongs to the disturbances of love than such change or even fickleness as can be rationally accounted for. A key to his thoughts on the subject is found in the closing portion of *Venus and Adonis* (stanzas 190—194) where the disappointed goddess indulges in a dismal prophecy regarding the future history of the passion she incarnated :—

> Sorrow on love hereafter shall attend.
> It shall be waited on with jealousy.
> It shall be fickle, false, and full of fraud.
> It shall be raging mad and silly mild.
> It shall suspect where is no cause of fear.
> It shall not fear where it should most mistrust.
> It shall be cause of war and dire events.

These and other sentences describe the doom by which man's happiness is to be frustrated; spoken in

the poem by the wrathful divinity as in the *Dream* negotiated by the blundering and mischief-making goblin; for only through some weird preternatural interference could elements so irrational and operations so pernicious be engrafted on lives otherwise sane and peaceful. The *Midsummer-Night's Dream* illustrates most of the sentences we have quoted. It exhibits love as fickle and false; as waited on with sorrow and jealousy; as blind and suspicious and raging mad; though neither of these terms may exactly express its central and ruling idea. Some indication of the various modes in which Shakespeare could handle his theme may be given by the quotation of the following sentences from Gervinus: "He shows us in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* how it fares with a man who abandons himself wholly to this passion, and also its effect on the energetic character still a stranger to it. He shows us in *Love's Labour's Lost* how a set of youthful companions unnaturally endeavour to crush it by ascetic vows and how the effort avenges itself. He shows in *All's Well that Ends Well* how love is despised by manly haughtiness and pride of rank and how it overcomes this by fidelity and devotion. He shows in the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* in a marvellous allegory the errors of blind unreasonable love which transports man into a dream-life devoid of reflection. He shows lastly in that great song of love, in *Romeo and Juliet*, how this most powerful of all passions seizes human beings in its most fearful power; and how, enhanced by natures favourable to its reception and by circumstances inimical to it, it

is carried to an extent in which it overstrains and annihilates itself."

Love in the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* is unreasonable, arbitrary, capricious; it is also fickle and faithless. Demetrius is 'spotted and inconstant' for he has abandoned his betrothed Helena who still dotes on him, and pursues Hermia whose affections are given to another. Hermia disregards parental authority, and in concert with her lover elopes into the forest defying state-law and resigning the sure prospect of a suitable marriage. Helena half-crazed clings to the man who has rejected her and betrays to him the confidences of her friend. So much at the beginning, but later we find the lonely Helena wooed by both the young men, and the more favoured Hermia distracted by desertion. Demetrius has returned to his first love and Lysander in turn is playing the part of perfidy. These latter transformations are of so unexpected a character that they have to be symbolically represented as the work of magic and the doing of the fairies. Not otherwise can the vagaries of love find explanation. Finally Demetrius adheres to his Helena; and Lysander, as the result of a purer and diviner magic, returns to his Hermia; and all ends well.

But these are not all the vagaries of love. Bottom is enraptured with the Fairy Queen and remembers it as a dream, as a most rare vision. Along with his presumption is the condescension or degradation of Titania who, too, has had visions and remembers that she was enamoured of an ass. At an earlier stage

he is in love with a changeling boy. The story of 'yramus and Thisbe, apart from its tragic ending, hows the rashness of the lovers who, disregarding atural guardianship, met by moonlight and arranged heir fatal tryst. Even the heroic Theseus, as we are eminded, has in the past broken his faith with more than one queen; and, in the jealous bickerings of the Fairy King and Queen, Oberon reproaches Titania with having assisted her favourite Theseus in his love adventures. Thus the caprice or the lawlessness of love is everywhere indicated. We may recall the words of Bottom, "reason and love keep little company together now-a-days;" and refrain from wondering at the ejaculation of Puck; Lord, what fools these mortals be!

In all this the chief point is the lesson symbolically taught by the use of the magic herbs. Whether the allegorical application of the story of the "little western flower" to the particular circumstances of the mind and life of the Countess of Essex be justified or not, the name *love-in-idleness* seems intended to describe the state of heart in which one is liable to wanderings or reversals of affection. The pansy has many names expressive of remembrance or of love; but the one in the text is significantly chosen. And we imagine that Shakespeare is illustrating the moral truth that affections are most secure in the case of the man who is engaged in the active service of his country or his kind. This reference to idleness in a play of dreamland may recall to us the words of

Mercutio when he learned that Romeo was in love;—

> I talk of dreams;
> Which are the children of an idle brain
> Begot of nothing but vain fantasy;
> Which is as thin of substance as the air;
> And more inconstant than the wind.

Over against this flower with its bewitching juice is the more efficacious herb described as Dian's bud—which is the rectifier of wrongs and the reconciler of the estranged. This bud, which has so blessed a power, is symbolical of the virtue, chastity, of which Diana was the patron goddess (of whom Elizabeth may have been pictured as a sort of avatar). The lesson then is that peace and reconcilement is the reward of virtue. The healing efficacy of this consecrated herb can undo the mischief-making charm, can restore sanity to the mind, loyalty to the spirit and felicity to the life. Its potent exercise therefore brings the story of the illstarred lovers to a happy ending, and they leave us with the prospect of wedded happiness.

We thus see that while the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* is mainly occupied with the presentation for humorous effect of the caprice of love with its consequent lawlessness and its breaches of the ties of friendship and affection; while it is constructed to irradiate a festive evening with mirth and laughter and comical reflection, so that even the author himself is content though it be regarded as meaningless "no more yielding than a dream;" yet it is wrong to assume (as is usually done) that it is a play devoid of motive, and in that respect separated from the rest of Shakespeare's work. The

perplexities of the play which amuse or astonish us are to be taken along with the symbolical elements which contain the poet's moral teaching and the preternatural elements (the working of Puck and Oberon) which point to the poet's conceptions of the many-sided mystery that envelops and directs our life. Nor is it unimportant to note that amongst many minor indications of the influence of this play on the young mind of Milton this symbolical element of magic herb and the ministry of preternatural agency reappear in the great ethical masque of Comus.

Next to this treatment of the vagaries and lessons regarding love, we may, perhaps, detect some veins of satire bearing on the literary or histrionic types and foibles of the age. Such a brilliant 'upstart' as young William Shakespeare could not but awaken jealousy among the University wits and the companies of players that found themselves being surpassed in popularity and success. Shakespeare probably met more encouragement than enmity; but he had something of both; and his geniality of temper did not prevent him from returning, in his own humorous way, the shafts of jealousy and from pouring ridicule on pretensions which he despised. His earliest play, *Love's Labour's Lost*, has been called the Comedy of Affectations, because it ridicules the prevalent euphuistic style, the alliterations and sharp antitheses and other literary devices that caught the fancy of the time. Similarly the interlude of *Pyramus and Thisbe* in the fifth Act of this play seems to us charged

after that rival's death. The sketch of Bottom on that view must have been written in the summer of 1592 (if not earlier); and once written it was too good to be lost; and its production may have followed in such a form as to leave the original intention undiscoverable. But while the closing lines of Puck were manifestly written for the stage and may be referred to the 1592 edition, it is equally manifest that the preceding lines, the entrance of Puck and the epithalamium of Oberon, are most appropriate not for the stage, but for a private mansion, and are adapted to a grand nuptial celebration. It is therefore with reasonableness that Fleay has named the marriage of the Earl of Derby, 24th January 1595, as the occasion. And it would seem probable that, while the story of Bottom and the Interlude would have been complete in the earlier edition, the part played by Oberon and his fairy powers must have been designed mainly for the latter. At the best, however, all this is but conjecture. It is possible that the stage edition was the later adaptation to permanent use. It illustrates the intricacy and uncertainty of such questions to note that while the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* has affinities with *Love's Labour's Lost* (original edition, 1589, revised 1597) in its literary criticisms, it has affinity with the *Comedy of Errors*, not only in the abundance of mistakes, but in repeated references in the early play to transformation into an ass. This connects the two in point of time; but while the *Errors* was probably originally written in 1590, it is known that it was reproduced in a newly-revised form on the 26th

December 1594, one month before the supposed second date of the *Dream*.

COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURE.

Next to the informing idea we have to study the STRUCTURE or construction and composition of the play. A drama is literally an action; that is to say, it involves a story, or a succession of events so related and evolved as to constitute a unity. This story or chain of events is usually called the Plot. The evolution of a drama should move on a generally recognised plan. The subject and the leading characters should be introduced near the beginning. The story should gradually expand and ramify. Unexpected incidents should occur; new complications should arise; the interest of the audience should be keenly aroused as to the issue, and through varying experiences a state of suspense should be maintained. Somewhere about the fourth Act the climax is reached. The critical point is then passed, or the chief determining influence has been exercised. Thereafter the subject narrows and descends gradually, though not without new situations or new devices, to the close. While there is one main stream of events, it is found convenient to have a second or subsidiary story. This furnishes variety (and usually contrasts) of characters, and it adds to the complications of events. But it is essential that this second story be truly subsidiary, that it should mingle as a smaller stream with the main story and contribute to its progress and development.

According to these principles the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* can hardly be called a regular comedy. Instead of one or two it contains four or five stories; and the supremacy of the main story can hardly be said to be sufficiently maintained. Let us look at the component parts—

(1) There is, first, the marriage of Theseus. This is the occasion rather than the subject of the play. It is the event introduced in prospect at the beginning and signalised at the end. It is the occasion of the Fairies' arrival from India; the occasion also of the histrionic exploits of the Athenian handicraftsmen and of their interlude of Pyramus and Thisbe. But Theseus is absent from the central development of the play and his marriage in the temple is a thing reported, not witnessed. The story of Theseus is therefore after all purely subsidiary to some other story or design. The marriage celebration is the setting, not the substance of the central action, but it is the bond that unifies the action; and it serves both as starting point and culmination of the whole.

(2) The centre of the play is mainly occupied with the experiences of the two young pairs of Athenian lovers. Their primary connection with Theseus lies partly in their subjection to Athenian law which was embodied in his will, partly in the circumstance that one of the heroines, the one whose fate first becomes a matter of interest to us, is the daughter of a courtier. The young men are, however, known to him as belonging to the ranks of his nobles. The absolute power vested in Theseus makes his introduction at the

beginning necessary; while the celebration of the other two marriages along with his own at the end adds charm to his large tolerant character and intensifies the pleasure of the happy ending. But the lovers, not Theseus, occupy the stage throughout. Their story is therefore the main one. Had Shakespeare's object been to present character, his method would doubtless have been different. Theseus would have been the hero. But the object is to portray the trials and errors of youthful love. This the poet has done in his two imaginary couples; while the presence of Theseus serves to impart grandeur to a story otherwise obscure, and to leave with us an image, not merely of struggling and blundering youth, but of ripened and masterful manhood.

(3) The story of Bottom and the rude mechanics has no direct reference to the main story. It is a result of the marriage of Theseus, and it is interwoven with the story of the Fairies through the connection Puck succeeded in establishing between Titania and Bottom. Towards the story of the lovers it, however, serves the purpose of contrast. The rude craftsmen are foils to the polished courtiers, and their story raises laughter while the other appeals to pity.

(4) The Fairies while directly connected with Theseus since they have come to bless his marriage and incidentally connected with the mechanics through the infatuation of Titania for Bottom and the attendance of her Fairies upon him, are still more closely connected with the central story, for the development of that story is made to depend on the secret

interference of Oberon and the blundering execution of his will by Puck.

(5) The *Pyramus and Thisbe* interlude while acted or 'discharged' by the craftsmen in honour of Theseus and his guests is thus performed in presence of the younger couples also, and is the occasion of observations indicating character by Demetrius and Lysander. And as a comico-tragic love-story it is a foil or contrast to the serio-comic love experiences of the main story.

We have thus five elements exhibiting at least three types of manners; the polished and high-bred in Theseus and his courtiers, the rude and rough in Bottom and his comrades, the light and airy in Oberon and his group. The marvellous thing of the play is the harmonious blending of these diverse and incongruous elements, the blending in harmony and in indivisible unity. In one phase of sentiment, in one stream of music, in one glow of colour they pass successively before us, giving us the various notes of amusement or astonishment or charm that make up the merriment of a happy summer night. It is best to regard the story of the lovers as the main action; the story of the mechanics as a foil thereto; and the action of the Fairies as the supernatural element of magic power which in the one case by potent herbs, in the other by the ass's head, introduces complications and surprises, enhancing the richness and the salience of the stories. The story of Theseus is an enlargement setting off the first; the story of Pyramus and Thisbe completes the exhibition of the second. Practically

therefore the elements are three: the loosely connected story of the Athenian Court and Courtiers ending in the triple marriage; the subsidiary story of the handicraftsmen and their theatrical ambitions; and the Fairy representation in which the story of the jealousy of Oberon and Titania is made less prominent than the influence wrought by fairy power on the lives of the characters of the other stories.

The division into five Acts was not made by Shakespeare and might not have had his approval. What we have is a succession of scenes and incidents in three divisions which may be distinguished as the Beginning, the Middle and the End. The Beginning (marked as Act I) consists of a long scene in which the coming marriage of Theseus and the situation and intentions of the lovers are fully introduced, and a short scene in which the rude mechanics are presented and their part indicated. Over against and as a counterpart to this is the End, consisting also of two scenes, a short scene (Act IV, Scene ii) where the craftsmen are again alone, and a long scene in which in the presence of Theseus now married and the couples happily united the interlude (with its various elements, mirthful, mournful and grotesque) is enacted. It is manifest that Act IV, Scene ii, should be the first scene of the last Act. Both the Beginning and the End take place in Athens, each containing a scene in the palace and a scene in Quince's house. The Middle, which is the body of the play, is entirely enacted in the wood. It consists of five scenes, enacted in three parts of the wood.

This Middle may be called the poem of Oberon. It opens (Act II, Scene i) with a full presentation of the Fairies, with an account of the fateful jealousy of the king and queen, and an indication of the stratagem by which Oberon is to bring Titania to obedience. The second part of the scene (for like I. i. it has two parts) introduces two of the lovers, Demetrius who has arrived in pursuit of Hermia, and Helena who is in pursuit of Demetrius. The important point is that Oberon resolves to deal with Demetrius and commissions his adjutant Puck accordingly. The second scene (II. ii.) takes us to Titania's retreat where in her sleep her eyes are 'latched.' There arrive the other two, the eloping lovers, who now seek sleep for the remainder of the night. Puck in search of Demetrius comes on sleeping Lysander and bewitches the wrong person. Demetrius and Helena pass; and the agitation of the latter awakens Lysander who now (from the effects of the love-juice) falls passionately in love with Helena. Helena regards herself as doubly mocked and Hermia awakes as from nightmare to find herself betrayed. These then are the first complications, the beginnings of sorrows.

The next scene (III. i.), which is still in the same night, introduces the mechanics at their rehearsal. The Duke's oak where they had agreed to meet in deep retirement is close to the bank where amongst flowers Titania takes her rest. Puck watching Titania discovers the 'hempen homespuns,' and studying them resolves to metamorphose the noisiest and most conceited of the crew. Almost in an instant it is done;

and the ass's head, revealing to the others the presence of spirits, puts them to headlong flight. Bottom gloriously sings, awakening Titania, who is at once enamoured of his beauty. She summons Fairy attendants to minister in every manner to her new-found love. This scene is a marvellous creation of grotesque and painless mirth. The next (III. ii.) takes us back to the unhappy lovers. First appear Demetrius and Hermia whom he is pursuing. Oberon recognises the former and Puck the latter; and the error in the anointing is discovered. Demetrius, however, soon falls asleep and Oberon applies the juice while Puck is sent in search of the lady who ought to be his love. Helena is brought; but, to the delight of the mischief-maker, she is being wooed by Lysander and will soon be wooed by both. The astonished lady can only imagine that she is the object of a conspiracy of scorn. Hermia arrives and seems to Helena to be a partner with the others in the plot. Helena pitifully bemoans broken friendship. The two young men, both desiring Helena, talk of a duel; and even the ladies driven to distraction are on the verge of violence. They leave the stage and Oberon (always beneficent) is now concerned to separate the young men and prevent a fatal fray. Puck beclouding the sky and uttering voices proves equal to the occasion. It is now approaching dawn; the weary night is well nigh spent and successively the four come in, tired, exhausted; and lie down to sleep. Whereupon Lysander's eyes are anointed with the healing juice that will undo the former error. As far as the lovers are concerned

their night is ended, and after their sleep they will awake to happiness.

The fifth scene (Act IV. i.) which though the place does not change is to be regarded as belonging to the following evening and night has as its object the rectification of Titania. How she has been spending her hours with Bottom is not very fully shown. Oberon tells Puck that he met her gathering flowers and favours for the monster whom she had already garlanded, and that to appease him she (with her now more divided affections) had surrendered the page who was the original cause of their disputes. This which happened 'behind the wood' may be supposed to have taken place by day. It is now evening again. Titania and her attendants are still providing entertainment for the donkey-headed guest, and at last the couple fall asleep together. Later Puck and Oberon appear and look with pity on the humiliation of the queen. Oberon touches her with Dian's bud and she awakes restored to reason. The ass's head is also removed, but Bottom is left asleep. Oberon and Titania dance in reconciliation and arrange to be together at the royal festivity and to crown the rejoicings with their blessings. At this point the voice of the lark sends them to invisibility; and the approaching daylight brings to the spot Theseus and his train, who are up celebrating the May morning before beginning a splendid hunt. The noise awakens the sleeping lovers who apparently for 24 hours have been in the grasp of Morpheus. Partial explanations are given. The hunt is abandoned.

First the royal train, then the transformed lovers, and finally Bottom (whom the morning light has wakened to find himself alone, though glorious in his loneliness) wend their way to Athens. The mistakes and confusions and defections and resentments are all o'er.

What has puzzled editors and expositors of this play is the question of Time. There is no real difficulty, but the universal misunderstanding makes further explanation necessary. Many writers (*e.g.*, Mr. Dowden) impute inconsistency to Shakespeare. Mr. Chambers says: "The plot should cover five days in all; actually it covers three." Mr. Furness (preface to *Variorum Edition*) accepts the five days and finds them by separating Acts II and III into successive nights,—an absolutely impossible method. Most writers seem to put Acts II, III, IV into one night. But the close of Act III brings us to the first dawn, and the greater part of the story of Bottom and Titania has to follow. Act IV, Scene i, gives us in three successive pictures or stages a second night in the wood.

The first controverted question is what is meant by the four days or four nights indicated in the opening lines of the play. Does this mean part of four or part of five days? That is to say, if the opening day and the last day are both reckoned days is the full number four or five. Or to put it otherwise, granted that the marriage is on 1st May, does the play open on the 27th April or on the 28th? Mr. Furness says, "it is never the custom when counting the days before the event to include the day that is passing." Accordingly he maintains

that there are five days and reckons from the 27th. Our opinion of human custom is the reverse. Two successive days are counted two days; one full day with part of the preceding and the succeeding has been reckoned three days, though it may be less than two; a week is popularly called eight days; the 30th January is in Latin rendered the third day before the calends of February. Such, we imagine, was the ancient universal method. What is said in the opening lines is that there are to be four sunsets before the *night* of the marriage. They are the sunsets of 28th, 29th, 30th April and 1st May. These are the four days intended. The First Act is on the 28th April; the lovers are in the wood on the night of the 29th; on the night of the 30th, Bottom is wound in the arms of the Fairy; and the Second Scene of Act IV finds us in Athens on the 1st of May.

That Acts II and III belong to one night (and not as Mr. Furness thinks to two) may be easily seen. In Act II, Titania is latched and a little later in Act III she is wakened to see Bottom. On Mr. Furness' view she must have slept nearly 24 hours, while all the time Oberon and Puck are waiting anxiously to know the consequence of the juice. The case of the lovers is equally clear. Act III, Scene ii, carries on the situation of Act II, Scene ii, with no change in the interval. The lovers are still benighted in the wood. And at the end of the Act they, one after another, drop down wearied from the wanderings of one long troubled night.

That Act IV is to be referred to a second night seems

also certain. The apparent difficulty is that it makes the lovers sleep 24 hours. This is a requirement of convenience. But it is to be noted (1) that they were 24 hours without sleep and were intensely wearied with the distractions of the night, while they have to arise refreshed to take part in the wedding festivities, and to be themselves wedded. (2) As there is danger of their awaking in the second night, the Fairies charm them into sounder sleep. Oberon (IV. i. 81) calls for music that will strike "more dead than common sleep" the senses of them all. This then is Shakespeare's explanation of the length of their sleep. (3) It is to be noted also that in the folio there is a stage direction placed between Acts III and IV containing the words: *they sleep all the Act*. This shows that the actors understood that a long sleep was intended. And since in Act III Aurora's harbinger (or the morning star) was beginning to shine, these arguments effectually disprove the interpretation which places Act IV in the same night as the two preceding Acts. To this it is to be added that there was an interval, necessarily subsequent to Act III (*cf.* Act III, Sc. ii, l. i.) in which Oberon met Titania, taunted her for her attentions to Bottom, and obtained from her the changeling page. This alone widely separates in time the Third and Fourth Acts. By no possibility can they be placed in the same night.

There is therefore no difficulty in the point of time. All is deliberate, careful, harmonious. The critical objection that might be raised is on the ground of proportion. The events of the first night in the

wood are in four scenes, or over one thousand lines. The events of the second night are given in one hundred lines. To this it may be answered that the representation of the Fairy attendants on Bottom, the comic sleep of Titania and the clown, the music and finally the dance represent as much time as lengthened passages of dialogue do. It is to be noted also that this first part of Act IV, Sc. i, is precisely in the manner, and contains half the material, of an ordinary masque. The interest is largely in the scenic display. The one point which we would call up Shakespeare to tell us about is how Bottom spent the intervening day in that retreat 'behind the wood' in the society of his Fairy love and her obedient retinue.

These two nights present to us stories quite distinct but united by the presence and power of Oberon who is the triumphant worker, the effective hero in both. And the story of the second night grows out of the proceedings of the former. For Titania appears at the beginning; is awakened at midnight to meet Bottom (III. i.) and spends the intervening time in the cultivation of his love. Thus, we repeat, if the Middle could be separated from the other parts of the play it might be called the poem of Oberon. But while thus it has a unity of its own, it is nevertheless completely subservient to the story of the marriages.

In the Notes the Moon-difficulty is discussed; and we have suggested that the phrase 'another moon' (l. 3) simply means 'next month.' It is stated that in the year 1592 new moon and May-day coincided; that there was new moon on the 1st of May (the date

assigned in IV. i. 130 as that of Theseus' marriage). It is at least possible that in that month of May this play was originally written; and that it was intended to be acted at Midsummer (cir. 24th June). No such acting is recorded, and as a matter of fact the theatres were, on account of the plague, closed for the season on the 22nd June. But it may well be that at this time Shakespeare put together his materials, and that two years and a half later, for the marriage of Lord Derby, he recast these materials and perfected his play. In so doing he would remove all temporary, local or personal elements, and adapt his moon to all future history. The moon of the present play seems to be rather less than a quarter old. She is shining during the rehearsal, but at a later hour, just before dawn, she seems to have no place in the starry welkin (III. ii. 356). She is apparently set. The opening speech must therefore be regarded either as using 'moon' in the sense of 'month,' or as being the unrevised expression of an earlier design.

CHARACTERS AND CHARACTERISATION.

Next to the story or plot the chief interest of a play lies in the presentation of character. Comedy in particular is the exhibition of human nature. Whatever type of the art may be followed, whatever element may be made to predominate, we expect to find some carefully studied portraiture of one or more persons whom we recognise as thoroughly human, but whose skilfully revealed idiosyncrasies are calcu-

lated to amuse the philosophic observer and to throw the general audiences into roars of laughter. Shakespeare became the greatest painter and interpreter of life that ever wrote. But such power pertains to the maturity of manhood. Knowledge of the inner nature of man and of the infinite variety of human life requires long observation as well as the insight of genius. The dramatist who in his youth easily sketches types is at best but an imitative artist. The original and creative poet derives his power, not only from books and theatres, but from long reflection on the manners of men and the problems of existence. In Shakespeare's two earliest comedies this power is undeveloped and the interest is largely in situation and incident or in argument and wit. In the next two (the *Dream* and the *Two Gentlemen*) there is a marked advance; the power is incipient but immature. In the fifth (the *Merchant*) the advance is still greater; and at the end of other two years when he is finishing his histories his powers of comic portraiture are at their highest.

In the *M. N. D.* the interest is not so much in individuals as in the contrast of classes and the description of the working of universal emotions. But at least two men, the heroic Theseus and the clownish Bottom, stand forth in definite outline, the one as an object of admiration, the other as a marvellous example of unblushing and comical conceit.

The requirements of characterisation are briefly these. First, the impression must be *distinct*. A definite image must be left on the minds of the spectators. This

means that the person has been fully and clearly conceived in the poet's mind, and also that his conception has been clearly and definitely expressed. To this end the character of the person must be in some manner indicated as soon as he appears upon the stage, and his subsequent bearing and speech must be such as to enlarge and deepen the first impression. The second requirement, *consistency*, thus arises out of the first. The character indicated must be maintained. Subsequent words and actions must correspond to the type and be recognised as natural expressions of it. Audiences, we mean, are not to be puzzled by inconsistencies that make them doubt whether the person before them has a settled disposition. They may of course in the work of a great dramatist be astonished by surprises that reveal the depths of human nature. Once more there must be a distinction between leading and subordinate characters. The sense of *proportion* must be followed. Characters that make the central elements of the story or that exercise a dominating influence on the issue must have space assigned to them proportionate to their importance. Some serve slight ends and must be slightly indicated.

Apart from such general conditions there are kinds of character, situation or circumstance that appeal irresistibly to our sense of the comic, and in the choice and delineation of these the genius of the dramatist is shown. In the play before us, which departs in so many ways from the regular type, the interest is largely in the bringing into ludicrous contact and association beings from widely differing spheres of

existence and from a poetic region of non-existence. We have seen that the elements of story may be regarded as of three main kinds, and that corresponding thereto are three groups of characters. At these—the courtiers, the craftsmen and the fairies—we shall successively glance.

(1) In the first group we observe that love of symmetry, of balance and of contrast which belongs to all Shakespeare's early work. A confident sense of freedom and an acceptance of the varieties and irregularities of life belongs only to his later periods. Accordingly we have here three couples about to be married; a serene majestic couple contrasted with two weak uncertain distracted couples; and these latter two contrasted with each other. Looking at the latter (as the agents in the main story), we do not find the distinctness of characterisation that we would desire. Not one of the four leaves on us a very definite impression of character. Points of contrast are obvious, especially in the heroines. Helena is tall and slender, Hermia is little and vigorous. Both are beautiful; but while Helena is fair with hands of perfect white, Hermia is represented as dark-complexioned with marvellously bright eyes. In conventional language Helena is a blonde and Hermia a brunette. In disposition Helena is timid, self-distrustful, inclined to shrink from difficulties, and when complications arise eager to return to Athens. This want of inner strength Hermia ridicules when she styles her a painted may-pole. Hermia on the other hand has strong determination and the gift of 'shrewishness.' She is ready to rebel

against wrongful exercise of authority, and when provoked will turn with fury against her former companion and bosom friend. It is not so easy to distinguish Lysander and Demetrius. The former appears to be an open ardent, impulsive lover; the latter is represented as inconstant, hard-hearted, one whose word Lysander affects to deem unreliable. Both are styled 'worthy' gentlemen; they are able to captivate the heroines and ready to settle their differences according to what was deemed the way of honour. But both are so much the play of external forces that it is impossible to trace their personalities. The interest is in the situation, not in the men.

Theseus is a distinct and noble character, traced in brief bold outline. In the words of Mr. Dowden he is "Shakespeare's conception of the heroic man of action in his hour of enjoyment and of leisure." He is quite conscious of his greatness. He is a kinsman of Hercules, and has himself shared in the performance of great exploits. He is now anticipating a day of happiness and can command a time of pageantry and triumphing. But while thus exalted as sovereign, as a recent conqueror and as a triumphant lover, he shows no element of haughtiness; but is sober, self-restrained, large-minded and tolerant. With joyous energy he combines the "graciousness of power." As a lover he is at once calm and ardent, impatient for the consummation, but devoid of fear or distraction or doubt. While thus contrasted to advantage with the younger couples, he surpasses Hermia's father in his treatment of the disobedient

damsel both by giving her time to decide, and by allowing a third and milder alternative. In contrast with his more fastidious queen he can tolerate the officious services of the rude and blundering mechanics, regarding the loyalty of their intention and accepting the will for the quality of execution. The story of the lovers affects him to the abandonment of his cherished hunt; but in their experiences he sees nothing but fantasies or love's delusions, and is led to utter his famous comparison of the lover, the lunatic and the poet. Herein we see how a great prince can enjoy what he half despises and only partially comprehends. The stage in all its degrees of excellence he regards as existing for his amusement, and as having no high significance beyond what his own mind can impart to it. Similarly the imagination of the poet, however delightful are its products, seems only to embody unrealities. Thus while Theseus looks down and around with tolerance, Shakespeare himself with a larger consciousness of what is of enduring greatness stands behind and smiles tolerantly on Theseus.

It has been observed that Theseus is the first of a type of which Shakespeare was fond and of which his *Henry V* is his best example. The parts of Theseus show evidence of later revision possibly immediately subsequent to the time (1598-99) when Shakespeare was engaged in the study of the victor of Agincourt.

(2) The handicraftsmen are a set of characters very visibly contrasted with the polished circle of the Athenian Court. They are rough hard-handed sons

of toil, dressed in the coarse cloth of common life, uneducated in the knowledge of schools and ignorant of the manners or speech of aristocratic life. They are workers of different trades, as doubtless their dress and figure indicate. They have their personal peculiarities too; the thin spare form of the tailor, the long nose of the tinker, the comfortable aspect of the joiner. The humour of the situation is in their ambition and conceit. They believe themselves capable of performing in the palace; and they expect to be handsomely rewarded, if not to be made pensioners for life. Amongst these Peter Quince is superior to the others in position and education. He is the general manager of the interlude, assigning to the others their parts and regulating the procedure. He has something of original ability; for while the others can but act the parts which they have conned, he is a poet and can write a ballad as required. The supreme character of the company however is the weaver, Nicholas Bottom, and he takes rank among Shakespeare's comic master-pieces. He has the best person and the best wit and the best voice among the handicrafts-men of the city. So the others admit in his absence as if they accepted his own estimate of himself. And in his presence, where flattery is needed, he is described as sweet-faced, proper, lovely and gentlemanlike. He is the soul of the company and without him they could not have the assurance to proceed. But the name Bully Bottom is a truer revelation of his character. His distinguishing characteristic is that he is ready to play all the parts at once; ready to rage as a tyrant

or condole as a lover, to sing as a nightingale or to roar as a lion. And he will dress himself up in any showy appearance, with beard and boots and ribbons and all the paraphernalia of the stage. The inimitable blundering in speech, the burlesque parody of Pyramus, the prompt resurrection to speak or to dance, the indomitable assurance that carries him along equally before clowns or lords—these, not to speak of the ass-head episode with its new sights and tastes and pleasures, make up a character which in the sphere of lower comedy could not well be surpassed. Whether we regard this portion of the play as a caricature of well-known individuals or not, it is manifestly a sketch, a semi-satirical sketch, of some of the ruder companies, of some of the less skilled and more presumptuous players, if not playwrights, of the time. And indirectly it illustrates the keen if untutored interest that even common tradesmen in the days of Elizabeth took in theatrical performances. That their minds are prosaic, matter-of-fact, unimaginative; that they provide material representations of wall and moonlight and the other properties of the play; and that they are highly delighted with their own grotesque performance is no surprise to us. In making themselves ridiculous they but supply the spectator with intervals of harmless laughter.

(3) When Shakespeare speaks of poets as giving to 'airy nothing a local habitation and a name,' he must be thinking of his own creation of fairy land. He came at the proper time to immortalise in verse the ancient belief in elves. The great Elizabethan move-

ment of mind, of which Shakespeare in his adolescence saw and felt the prime, was inspired at the commencement by the spirit of adventure and romance, though it culminated in a rational philosophy and the foundations of science. Witchcraft remained all through the epoch a general belief which even the learned countenanced. But the notions of fairy ringlets and the pranks of Robin Good-fellow were probably already confined to the simple and the uneducated. Chaucer two centuries before laughs at them as disappearing before the ubiquitous monks. But as lingering memorials of an interesting past they were calculated to afford merriment to the brisk audiences that thronged the theatres. And it was Shakespeare's advantage as one sprung from the common people that he was familiar with the materials out of which his genius could frame a poetic fabric of fairy land. In framing this fabric and perpetuating the memory of these beliefs he has so emphasised the brighter elements and so irradiated his shadowy world with fancy that stories of fairy land are the delight of childhood and a relaxation of the wisest in their moods of leisure or imaginative mirth.

The elves, as in early English they are called, were creations chiefly of the Norse imagination and correspond to the nymphs, genii, demons and kindred spirits of classical mythology. The name fairy comes from the literature of romance and is a concrete application of the abstract noun (originally a tri-syllable and meaning 'enchantment') derived from the original substantive *fay*. This fay is etymologically the Latin

fatum, fate, being directly derived from the Low Lat. *fata* which meant amongst the vulgar a goddess of destiny and was applied in Gaul to similar goddesses or women of Celtic superstition. These *faes* (as later by ordinary philological change they were called) were identified when the Romance literature expanded, with the Teutonic or Scandinavian elves. For a time the terms 'elf' and 'fay' seem to have been respectively masculine and feminine. But gradually they became synonymous descriptions of a vast and varied group of imaginary beings. In popular belief they were constantly associated with manifold experiences of domestic life.

As handled by Shakespeare they constitute a kingdom of their own with gradations of ranks and services. In their physical representation they are of varying sizes according to their rank or importance; some of them such as Mote being too small for observation, while mustard-seed, pease-blossom, cowslip are names that may be taken as illustrative descriptions. But fairies, like all spiritual creatures, may change their size or shape at pleasure. Puck can appear in a dozen forms, or imitate any kind of voice; and Titania when she sleeps amongst her flowers robed in the cast-off skin of a snake must be a much tinier and gentler lady than when, expanded with pride, she winds the Athenian weaver in her arms. Not only do they change size or shape, but like other spirits they can become invisible; as is Oberon through much of this play. Mankind, in whom they take so much of curious interest, they name mortals, or, in distinction from the

lower animals, human mortals. Birth and death are to them notable things; and in connection with the former they give gracious assistance. Similarly they attend at marriages to wish the couples domestic weal. They themselves are creatures of every age, living in immortality. In this play they are connected with the Amazons and heroes of antiquity, while they take part in domestic doings in England. Time and space have new meanings for the fairies. They can move with inconceivable velocity and compass the earth in a day or an hour. While in a sense omnipresent or prompt to appear anywhere they have their special home on an Indian mountain range and are most familiar with the fragrant East. They appear in the twilight or the moonlight and at sunrise vanish with the darkness. They take delight in flowers and perfumes, in butterflies and insect beauty and in all the lighter sensuous charm of our world. They have their favourite resorts by stream or fount or sea-shore, in grove or glade or meadow; and especially where green orbs mark the scene of their midnight dances. In their plenitude of pride they claim a sort of sovereignty over nature; and thus Titania supposes that the summer waits upon her when it blooms magnificently, and that winds and storms arise in consequence of her quarrel with her lord. In the centre of the forest at dead of night they hold their gorgeous revels and the air rings with fairy music. But woe to the intruder on their privacy. By their stamp they can shake the earth: or by their magic they can metamorphose a human head.

dreamland. Oberon has a vision of cupids and queens; Titania has a vision of beauty which disenchanted she knows to be of hideousness; Bottom has had an unutterable dream, a most rare vision, an everlasting memory; lovers awake from delusive dreams to betray or be betrayed and hearts are torn by revelations of unheard-of fickleness. In all this creation and confusion the fairies are the intermediaries. The mischief-maker Puck it is that has harassed the loves and the lives of the loving couples, and made merry over their misfortunes; he too it is that has read the soul of Bottom and found for him the fitting coronet. But Oberon is of a gentler disposition and is a friend of mortals. According to his will fairies not only rectify their own misdoings, but they also rectify wrongs in which they have had no share. They secure that in the end all is peace and that the happy lovers enter auspiciously on their married life. The marvellous imagination of Shakespeare has without any indication of incongruity wrought into a unity of harmonious action these strangely separate elements. And so at the close we awake as from gay and dazzling visions painted on a tissue of dreams. All doubts and fears are forgotten; merriment rings in our ears; fragrant memories of flowery banks, of odorous wreaths, of brilliant lustre, of music and dancing and strange enchantment abide. The brilliant phantasmagoria we know to be a dream. And we reflect that in dreams —the dreams of the spring-tide of an innocent life— there comes to us much of the truth of life; that there are in life elements of mystery which we can never

fully fathom and to much of which their very commonness blinds us; that there are in heaven and earth if not fairies at least more things than are dreamt of in our philosophies. So that if fairies are but as shadows we may (with the consent of Theseus) use our imaginations to amend them into substances. And so we regard our drama as a dream in which is gathered much of the reality of life, even as life is a reality in which there is much of moonshine and dreaming. For does not our poet who knew life so well tell us that while players are shadows, life itself is but a "walking shadow"; or again that we are such stuff as dreams are made of, and that our little life is rounded with a sleep. And yet man is 'noble in reason' and 'infinite in faculty;' and 'there is a divinity that shapes' his ends.

The name **Oberon** (Fr. *Auberon*) is supposed to be a Latinised or Gallicised form of the German Albrich or Alberich, literally meaning elf king (*alpe* being a variety of elf and *rich* being akin to our suffix *-ric*). This name appears in the German epic the *Nibelungen lied*. In *Chaucer* the king of the fairies receives a classical name, Pluto; but Oberon frequently appears in the Romance, or later medieval, literature. He is described as a dwarf and was believed to be about three feet high, with crooked shoulders. One account (for the historical sense was asleep) makes him the son of Julius Cæsar and Morgan de Fay. A more musically pompous lineage is given by Spenser (*Fairy Queen*, II. X. 72—76). Prometheus created a man whom he named Elfe, the father of all elfin kind. He in the gardens of Adonis found an angelic creature whom he called Fay and who was the mother of all fairies. From them sprang princes who ruled in India and America and who founded Cleopolis (London); Elfin, Elfinan, Elfiline, Elfinell,

Elfant, Elfar, Elfinor and others, many of whom were great in civil and martial affairs. Finally—

> After all these Elficleos did reign
> The wise Elficleos in great majesty,
> Who mightily that sceptre did sustain
> And with rich spoils and famous victory
> Did high advance the crown of fa-e-ry.
> He left two sons, of which fair Elferon
> The eldest brother did untimely die;
> Whose empty place the mighty Oberon
> Doubly supplied in spousal and dominion.

This was published in 1590 and was undoubtedly read by Shakespeare. And although Spenser's Romance and Shakespeare's *Dream* belong to different regions of literature, it is allowable to believe that the latter derived from the former something of the allegorical, ethical and imaginative elements that lie embedded beneath its surface.

Puck, who in this play is Oberon's jester and henchman, is chiefly created from Robin Good-fellow, the domestic sprite of popular belief; but with the functions of Robin Good-fellow are combined those of other fairies—the hobgoblin, the Will of the wisp, the incubus or nightmare (who was Robin's cousin). Belief in such characters was probably kept alive by tricks of personation. Out of these materials Shakespeare has created a new figure, Protean in shape, swift as the lightning, riotous in mischief and triumphant in magical power.

Titania, the queen, in accordance with the classic framework of the story, receives a classic name, used in Ovid as an epithet of Diana. And indeed the fairy queen had already been identified with Diana; while in *Chaucer* she is Proserpine (which was recognised as another name of the triple goddess). Shakespeare's Titania however does not derive her characteristics from the chaste goddess of hunting, or the queen of the under-world, or the moon riding in the heavens. The moon indeed she reverences, and she follows Hecate's team,

but in the same sense in which all fairies do. In *Spenser* the fairy queen is Tanaquill (who succeeded to the empire of Oberon) or Gloriana (which in another interpretation means Queen Elizabeth). Titania is the delicate and delightful creation of Shakespeare. The popular name of the queen of the fairies was Mab. In *Romeo and Juliet* she is recognised as the bringer of dreams. Romeo tells Mercutio that he has dreamt a dream; to which his friend replies (the passage may be read as completing Shakespeare's portraiture of fairy life)—

> O then I see Queen Mab hath been with you.
> She is the fairies' midwife; and she comes
> In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
> On the forefinger of an alderman,
> Drawn with a team of little atomies
> Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep;
> Her waggon-spokes made of long spinners' legs
> The cover, of the wings of grass-hoppers;
> The traces, of the smallest spider's web;
> The collars, of the moonshine's watery beams;
> Her whip, of cricket's bone; the lash, of film;
> Her waggoner, a small grey-coated gnat,
> Not half so big as a round little worm
> Pricked from the lazy finger of a maid;
> Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut,
> Made by the joiner squirrel, or old grub,
> Time out of mind the fairies' coachmakers.
> And in this state she gallops night by night
> Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love;
> O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on court'sies straight;
> O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream on fees;
> O'er ladies' lips who straight on kisses dream;
> Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues,
> Because their breaths with sweetmeats tainted are;
> Sometimes she gallops o'er a courtier's nose
> And then dreams he of smelling out a suit;

And sometimes comes she with a tithe-pig's tail
Tickling a parson's nose as a' lies asleep
Then dreams he of another benefice;
Sometime she driveth o'er a soldier's neck
And then dreams he of cutting foreign throats,
Of breaches, ambuscadoes, Spanish blades,
Of healths five fathom deep; and then anon
Drums in his ear, at which he starts, and wakes;
And being thus frighted swears a prayer or two,
And sleeps again. This is that very Mab
That plats the manes of horses in the night,
And bakes the elf-locks in foul sluttish hairs,
Which, once untangled, much misfortune bodes.

Bearing on the speeches and sentiments of the play the most distinctive critical question is the existence or non-existence of allegorical intention. In an ordinary play we do not look for allegory, but this is not an ordinary play. Literature from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century was full of allegory; either in the normal form of double meaning or in the methods of abstraction and personification. The English *Moralities* were characterised by personified abstractions and ethical designs. Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, the Elizabethan masterpiece of narrative poetry, is essentially allegorical. Double or treble meanings pertain to the general design and also to particular parts. It is therefore inherently probable that Shakespeare, writing a poetical drama (like Milton writing a poetical masque), should in allegorical forms interweave lessons of morality or conceptions of fanciful beauty. In the *Midsummer-Night's Dream* such may be sought

either in a mystic conception of the Fairies, or in the symbolism of the herbs with their magic juices. In addition to these there is a particular question regarding what is known as Oberon's Vision (II. i. 148—168). It is obvious that the fair Vestal-queen is an allusion to Elizabeth; and this being accepted as a nucleus, other concealed references are easily imagined. Thus in last century Warburton submitted that the Mermaid (*i.e. Siren*) was Mary, the contemporary queen of Scots, and that the stars bending to hear her music constituted an image of the English noblemen that were captivated by her charms. We find in Shakespeare's works of the same date analogous references to the stars with and without personal applications (see *Romeo and Juliet*, I. ii. 25; *Lucrece st.* 218.) And we may suppose that Shakespeare meant the application to be made or not according to the reader's pleasure. In this century Halpin (1843) concentrated attention on a totally different application. Regarding Elizabeth as the vestal he identified Cupid with the Earl of Leicester who was a suitor of the queen. In the Entertainments which he celebrated at Kenilworth (1575) in Elizabeth's honour, it was found that there were representations both of a mermaid and of a dolphin. Here then were materials for this image apart from the queen of Scots and her husband the Dauphin of France. Shakespeare may have heard of, if he did not actually see, the grand performance. The force of the discovery is lessoned by the knowledge that such things were familiar in the masques of the time. Halpin's chief endeavour was

to identify "the little western flower" on whom Cupid's bolt fell when it missed the queen with another lady to whom Leicester made love. This is the crux of the interpretation. Purple or sanguine flowers are feigned to have sprung from blood untimely shed; and thus from the blood of Adonis (*V. and A.*, 195) Shakespeare says, "A purple flower sprung up, chequered with white;" and in the story of Leicester the fate of his first wife, Amy Robsart, might have been recalled, though that would have involved the difficulty of blending in one picture elements of various dates. The image in the text however is of a white flower changed to purple, not a new flower created; and this it is supposed is capable of a purely ethical interpretation, of innocence changed to guilt. On the whole we do not think that this fair colour of a flower which maidens love and fondly name can have been thought of as emblematic of evil, or that the 'love's wound' which has coloured it has any signification beyond the blameless pathos of life. It is possible enough that the poet drew the materials of his fancy from the lives of Elizabeth and Mary and Leicester, and their schemes or ambitions; but to no single application does he commit himself. He revels in his wealth of fancy, careless what interpretation we may choose, and he leaves us dazzled and delighted. Shakespeare himself was a Proteus whose ideas could take many and changing shapes, all of which might refuse to be bound or stereotyped. In the words of Arnold's great descriptive sonnet—

Others abide our question; thou art free!

THE VERSE.

Modern English Comedy is written in prose; the dramatist's aim being to furnish rapid and brilliant dialogue in terse, pointed, sparkling, epigrammatic sentences. Tragedy and the Historical Play, consequent on Marlowe' s great success in 1587, are written in blank verse. These two methods or vehicles of expression are after the first decade of his life fully accepted by Shakespeare. But in his first plays he appropriates prose to his clowns, and for his normal style largely employs the earlier method of rhyme. Abundance of rhyme in a play is correctly recognised as a mark of early date; but the argument is made ridiculous when it is assumed that every rhyming passage in a later play is to be regarded as written early. A paramount consideration with the Elizabethans was *variety*. To prevent monotony, to awaken and sustain interest, blank and rhyming verse are made to alternate, the latter being preferentially used in the more emotional passages.

In Shakespeare's blank verse there is a continuous evolution or modification of manner. In his later plays lines with an eleventh syllable, or what is called a double (or feminine) ending, are increasingly numerous; overflow, or the running of one line into another without a stop or pause at the end, becomes frequent; and in the latest plays elision or slurring is often found. These points which have been so largely investigated as mechanical signs of date are in reality external or incidental indications of a change that

may be described as the gradual attainment (chequered by occasional carelessness) of ease and mastery. In the primitive style the poet thinks in single lines; each verse seems a separate effort of thought and a definite unit of metre. In the later style the poet thinks in sentences; and these often end in the middle of the line. The sense, as Milton requires, becomes "variously drawn out." Occasional elisions and double-endings are a response to the instinct that seeks freedom and artful variety.

The *Midsummer-Night's Dream* illustrates Shakespeare's early methods in respect of prose and the large use of rhyme. Its blank verse is somewhat in advance of the primitive type; while certain passages show more freedom than pertains to the general style of the play, and even anticipate the mature manner. The student may note III. ii. 192—220 as a partial, and V. i. 1—20 as a more marked, advance.

It is due to the poetical character of this play that it is further diversified in an unusual degree by lyric lines and measures. Especially the short four-beat line (of eight or seven syllables), in couplets or more rarely in quatrains, is employed as the ordinary form of Fairy speech.

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THESEUS, Duke of Athens.
EGEUS, Father to Hermia.
LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, } in love with Hermia.
PHILOSTRATE, Master of the Revels to Theseus.
QUINCE, a Carpenter.
SNUG, a Joiner.
BOTTOM, a Weaver.
FLUTE, a Bellows-mender.
SNOUT, a Tinker.
STARVELING, a Tailor.
HIPPOLYTA, Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus.

HERMIA, daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander.
HELENA, in love with Demetrius.
OBERON, King of the Fairies.
TITANIA, Queen of the Fairies.
PUCK, or Robin Good-fellow.
PEAS-BLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, MUSTARD-SEED, } Fairies.
Other Fairies attending their King and Queen.
Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta.

SCENE—ATHENS and a Wood near it.

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—Athens. A Room in the Palace of THESEUS.

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, *and Attendants.*

The. Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace; four happy days bring in
Another moon: but, O, methinks, how slow
This old moon wanes! she lingers my desires,
Like to a step-dame, or a dowager,
Long withering out a young man's revenue.
Hip. Four days will quickly steep themselves in nights;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities.
The. Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth:
Turn melancholy forth to funerals;
The pale companion is not for our pomp.—
[*Exit* PHILOSTRATE.
Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword,
And won thy love doing thee injuries;
But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling.

Enter EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, *and* DEMETRIUS.

Ege. Happy be Theseus, our renownéd duke!

The. Thanks, good Egeus: what's the news with thee?

Ege. Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.—
Stand forth, Demetrius:—My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.—
Stand forth, Lysander:—and, my gracious duke,
This man hath witched the bosom of my child.
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
And interchanged love-tokens with my child;
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,
With faining voice, verses of faining love;
And stolen the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats,—messengers
Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth;
With cunning hast thou filched my daughter's heart,
Turned her obedience, which is due to me,
To stubborn harshness:—and, my gracious duke,
Be it so she will not here before your grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,—
As she is mine, I may dispose of her:
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately provided in that case.

The. What say you, Hermia? be advised, fair maid.
To you your father should be as a god;
One that composed your beauties; yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax,
By him imprinted, and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it.—
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

Her. So is Lysander.

The. In himself he is;
But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,

The other must be held the worthier.

Her. I would, my father looked but with my eyes!

The. Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

Her. I do entreat your grace to pardon me.
I know not by what power I am made bold,
Nor how it may concern my modesty,
In such a presence here, to plead my thoughts;
But I beseech your grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case,
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

The. Either to die the death, or to abjure
For ever the society of men.
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires,
Know of your youth, examine well your blood,
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
You can endure the livery of a nun;
For aye to be in shady cloister mewed,
To live a barren sister all your life,
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.
Thrice blessèd they that master so their blood,
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage;
But earthlier-happy is the rose distilled
Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.

Her. So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
Ere I will yield my virgin patent up
Unto his lordship whose unwishèd yoke
My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

The. Take time to pause; and by the next new moon,—
The sealing-day betwixt my love and me
For everlasting bond of fellowship,—
Upon that day, either prepare to die
For disobedience to your father's will;
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would;
Or on Diana's altar to protest

For aye austerity and single life.
Dem. Relent, sweet Hermia;—and, Lysander, yield
Thy crazéd title to my certain right.
Lys. You have her father's love, Demetrius;
Let me have Hermia's: do you marry him.
Ege. Scornful Lysander! true, he hath my love,
And what is mine my love shall render him;
And she is mine, and all my right of her
I do estate unto Demetrius.
Lys. I am, my lord, as well derived as he,
As well possessed; my love is more than his;
My fortunes every way as fairly ranked—
If not with vantage —as Demetrius';
And, which is more than all those boasts can be,
I am beloved of beauteous Hermia.
Why should not I then prosecute my right?
Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
And won her soul; and she, sweet lady, dotes,
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,
Upon this spotted and inconstant man.
The. I must confess, that I have heard so much,
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof;
But, being over-full of self-affairs,
My mind did lose it.—But, Demetrius, come;
And come, Egeus: you shall go with me,
I have some private schooling for you both.—
For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
To fit your fancies to your father's will,
Or else the law of Athens yields you up—
Which by no means we may extenuate—
To death, or to a vow of single life.—
Come, my Hippolyta: what cheer, my love?—
Demetrius and Egeus, go along:
I must employ you in some business
Against our nuptial, and confer with you
Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

Ege. With duty and desire we follow you.

[*Exeunt* THES., HIP., EGE., DEM., *and Train.*

Lys. How now, my love? Why is your cheek so pale?
How chance the roses there do fade so fast?
Her. Belike for want of rain, which I could well
Beteem them from the tempest of mine eyes.
Lys. Ay me! for aught that ever I could read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth;
But, either it was different in blood,
Her. O cross! too high to be enthrall'd to low!—
Lys. Or else misgraffèd in respect of years,
Her. O spite! too old to be engaged to young!—
Lys. Or else it stood upon the choice of friends,
Her. O hell! to choose love by another's eyes!—
Lys. Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentary as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream,
Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
And ere a man hath power to say,—'Behold!'
The jaws of darkness do devour it up:
So quick bright things come to confusion.
Her. If then true lovers have been ever crossed,
It stands as an edict in destiny:
Then let us teach our trial patience,
Because it is a customary cross,
As due to love as thoughts, and dreams, and sighs,
Wishes, and tears, poor Fancy's followers.
Lys. A good persuasion: therefore, hear me, Hermia.
I have a widow aunt, a dowager
Of great revénue, and she hath no child:
And she respects me as her only son.
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues;

There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee;
And to that place the sharp Athenian law
Cannot pursue us. If thou lov'st me, then,
Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night,
And in the wood, a league without the town,
Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
To do observance to a morn of May,
There will I stay for thee.

Her. My good Lysander!
I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow
By his best arrow with the golden head;
By the simplicity of Venus' doves;
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves;
And by that fire which burned the Carthage queen,
When the false Trojan under sail was seen;
By all the vows that ever men have broke,
In number more than ever women spoke;
In that same place thou hast appointed me,
To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

Lys. Keep promise, love.—Look, here comes Helena.

Enter HELENA.

Her. God speed fair Helena! Whither away?

Hel. Call you me fair? that fair again unsay.
Demetrius loves your fair: O happy fair!
Your eyes are lode-stars, and your tongue's sweet air
More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.
Sickness is catching: O, were favour so,
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;
My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,
My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.
Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,
The rest I'd give to be to you translated.
O, teach me how you look, and with what art
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.

Her. I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.
Hel. O, that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!
Her. I give him curses, yet he gives me love.
Hel. O, that my prayers could such affection move!
Her. The more I hate, the more he follows me.
Hel. The more I love, the more he hateth me.
Her. His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.
Hel. None, but your beauty: would that fault were mine!
Her. Take comfort: he no more shall see my face;
Lysander and myself will fly this place.
Before the time I did Lysander see,
Seemed Athens as a paradise to me:
O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,
That he hath turned a heaven into a hell!
Lys. Helen, to you our minds we will unfold:
To-morrow night, when Phœbe doth behold
Her silver visage in the watery glass,
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,—
A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal—
Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.
Her. And in the wood, where often you and I
Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie,
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,
There my Lysander and myself shall meet;
And thence, from Athens turn away our eyes,
To seek new friends and stranger companies.
Farewell, sweet playfellow: pray thou for us,
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!—
Keep word, Lysander: we must starve our sight
From lovers' food, till morrow deep midnight.
Lys. I will, my Hermia. [*Exit* HERM.]—Helena, adieu:
As you on him, Demetrius dote on you! [*Exit.*

Hel. How happy some o'er othersome can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she;
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
He will not know what all but he do know;
And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
So I, admiring of his qualities.
Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
Love can transpose to form and dignity:
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;
And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind:
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste;
Wings and no eyes, figure unheedy haste:
And therefore is Love said to be a child,
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.
As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,
So the boy Love is perjured every where;
For ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eyne,
He hailed down oaths that he was only mine;
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.—
I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:
Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
Pursue her; and for this intelligence
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense:
But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
To have his sight thither and back again. *Exit.*

SCENE II.—Athens. A Room in QUINCE'S House.

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, *and* STARVELING.

Quin. Is all our company here?

Bot. You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip.

Quin. Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our

interlude before the duke and the duchess on his wedding-day at night.

Bot. First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on; then read the names of the actors; and so grow to a point.

Quin. Marry, our play is—The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby.

Bot. A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry.—Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll.—Masters, spread yourselves.

Quin. Answer, as I call you.—Nick Bottom the weaver.

Bot. Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

Quin. You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

Bot. What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

Quin. A lover, that kills himself most gallantly for love

Bot. That will ask some tears in the true performing of it: if I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms; I will condole in some measure. To the rest yet; my chief humour is for a tyrant: I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split.

"The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison gates;
And Phibbus' car
Shall shine from far,
And make and mar
The foolish Fates."

This was lofty.—Now name the rest of the players.—This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein; a lover is more condoling.

Quin. Francis Flute the bellows-mender.

Flu. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. You must take Thisby on you.

Flu. What is Thisby ? a wandering knight ?

Quin. It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

Flu. Nay, faith, let me not play a woman; I have a beard coming.

Quin. That's all one. You shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

Bot. An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too. I'll speak in a monstrous little voice :—"Thisne, Thisne,"—"Ah, Pyramus, my lover dear! thy Thisby dear, and lady dear!"

Quin. No, no; you must play Pyramus;—and, Flute, you Thisby.

Bot. Well, proceed.

Quin. Robin Starveling the tailor.

Star. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother.—Tom Snout the tinker.

Snout. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. You, Pyramus's father; myself Thisby's father.—Snug, the joiner, you, the lion's part :—and, I hope, here is a play fitted.

Snug. Have you the lion's part written ? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

Quin. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

Bot. Let me play the lion too : I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me ; I will roar, that I will make the duke say, 'Let him roar again, let him roar again.'

Quin. An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek ; and that were enough to hang us all.

All. That would hang us, every mother's son.

Bot. I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us : but I will aggravate my

voice so, that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 't were any nightingale.

Quin. You can play no part but Pyramus:—for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man,—a proper man, as one shall see in a summer's day,—a most lovely, gentleman-like man:—therefore, you must needs play Pyramus.

Bot. Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?

Quin. Why, what you will.

Bot. I will discharge it in either your straw-colour beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow.

Quin. Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play bare-faced.—But, masters, here are your parts: and I am to entreat you, request you, and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night, and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight: there will we rehearse, for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogged with company, and our devices known. In the meantime I will draw a bill of properties, such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not.

Bot. We will meet; and there we may rehearse more obscenely and courageously. Take pains; be perfect; adieu.

Quin. At the duke's oak we meet.

Bot. Enough; hold, or cut bow-strings.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—A Wood near Athens.

Enter, from opposite sides, a Fairy and PUCK.

Puck. How now, spirit, whither wander you?

Fai. Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green:
The cowslips tall her pensioners be;
In their gold coats spots you see,—
Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours;
I must go seek some dew-drops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.
Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone:
Our queen and all her elves come here anon.

Puck. The king doth keep his revels here to-night:
Take heed the queen come not within his sight;
For Oberon is passing fell and wrath,
Because that she as her attendant hath
A lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king:
She never had so sweet a changeling;
And jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild;
But she perforce withholds the loved boy,
Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy;
And now they never meet in grove or green,
By fountain clear or spangled starlight sheen,
But they do square, that all their elves, for fear,
Creep into acorn cups and hide them there.

Fai. Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Called Robin Good-fellow. Are you not he
That frights the maidens of the villagery;
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm;
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck:
Are not you he?

Puck. [Fairy], thou speak'st aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon, and make him smile,
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile
Neighing in likeness of a silly foal;
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab;
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob,
And on her withered dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me,
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
And 'tailor' cries, and falls into a cough,
And then the whole quire hold their hips and laugh
And waxen in their mirth and neeze and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.—
But room [now], fairy: here comes Oberon.

Fai. And here my mistress.—Would that he were gone!

Enter, from one side, OBERON *with his Train, and from the other,* TITANIA *with hers.*

Obe. Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

Tita. What, jealous Oberon! Fairy, skip hence:
I have forsworn his bed and company.

Obe. Tarry, rash wanton. Am not I thy lord?
Tita. Then I must be thy lady: but I know
When thou hast stolen away from fairy land
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
Come from the farthest steep of India,
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
Your buskined mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded? and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity.
Obe. How canst thou thus, for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigenia, whom he ravished?
And make him with fair Ægle break his faith,
With Ariadne, and Antiopa?
Tita. These are the forgeries of jealousy:
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,
Or in the beached margin of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have sucked up from the sea
Contagious fogs, which, falling in the land,
Have every pelting river made so proud,
That they have overborne their continents;
The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard:
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,
And crows are fatted with the murrain flock;
The nine men's morris is filled up with mud;
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green

For lack of tread are undistinguishable:
The human mortals want their winter cheer
No night is now with hymn or carol blest;
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound:
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose;
And on old Hiems' chin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries; and the mazéd world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which.
And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension;
We are their parents and original.
Obe. Do you amend it, then; it lies in you.
Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
I do but beg a little changeling boy,
To be my henchman.
Tita. Set your heart at rest,
The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was a votress of my order:
And, in the spicéd Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossiped by my side,
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking the embarkéd traders on the flood;
When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
Following,—her womb then rich with my young squire—
Would imitate, and sail upon the land
To fetch me trifles, and return again,
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.

But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake I do rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him.
Obe. How long within this wood intend you stay?
Tita. Perchance, till after Theseus' wedding-day.
If you will patiently dance in our round,
And see our moonlight revels, go with us;
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.
Obe. Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.
Tita Not for thy fairy kingdom.—Fairies, away!
We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.
[*Exit* TITANIA, *with her Train.*
Obe. Well, go thy way: thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.—
My gentle Puck, come hither: thou remembrest
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the sea-maid's music.
Puck. I remember.
Obe. That very time I saw—but thou could'st not—
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all armed; a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal throned by the west,
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts:
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quenched in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it Love-in-idleness,

Fetch me that flower, the herb I showed thee once:
The juice of it, on sleeping eyelids laid,
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

Puck. I'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes. [*Exit.*

Obe. Having once this juice,
I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
The next thing when she waking looks upon—
Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
On meddling monkey, or on busy ape—
She shall pursue it with the soul of love.
And ere I take this charm off from her sight—
As I can take it with another herb—
I'll make her render up her page to me.
But who comes here? I am invisible;
And I will overhear their conference.

Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA *following him.*

Dem. I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
The one I'll stay, the other stayeth me.
Thou told'st me they were stolen into this wood;
And here am I, and wood within this wood
Because I cannot meet my Hermia
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

Hel. You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant;
But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
Is true as steel. leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you.

Dem. Do I entice you? do I speak you fair?
Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth
Tell you I do not nor I cannot love you?

Hel. And even for that do I love you the more.

I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you:
Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love,—
And yet a place of high respect with me,—
Than to be used as you use your dog?

Dem. Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit,
For I am sick when I do look on thee.

Hel. And I am sick when I look not on you.

Dem. You do impeach your modesty too much
To leave the city, and commit yourself
Into the hands of one that loves you not;
To trust the opportunity of night
And the ill counsel of a desert place
With the rich worth of your virginity.

Hel. Your virtue is my privilege: for that
It is not night when I do see your face,
Therefore I think I am not in the night;
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,
For you, in my respect, are all the world.
Then how can it be said I am alone,
When all the world is here to look on me?

Dem. I'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes,
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.

Hel. The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
Run when you will, the story shall be changed,—
Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase;
The dove pursues the griffin; the mild hind
Makes speed to catch the tiger. Bootless speed,
When cowardice pursues, and valour flies!

Dem. I will not stay thy questions: let me go;
Or, if thou follow me, do not believe
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

Hel. Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,

You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!
Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex.
We cannot fight for love, as men may do;
We should be wooed, and were not made to woo.
I'll follow thee, and make a heaven of hell,
To die upon the hand I love so well.

[*Exeunt* DEMETRIUS *and* HELENA.

Obe. Fare thee well, nymph: ere he do leave this grove,
Thou shalt fly him, and he shall seek thy love.

Re-enter PUCK.

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

Puck. Ay, there it is.

Obe. I pray thee, give it me.
I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows;
Quite over-canopied with lush woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine:
There sleeps Titania, sometime of the night,
Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight
And there the snake throws her enamelled skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in:
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,
And make her full of hateful fantasies.
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove.
A sweet Athenian lady is in love
With a disdainful youth: anoint his eyes;
But do it, when the next thing he espies
May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he hath on.
Effect it with some care, that he may prove
More fond on her than she upon her love.
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

Puck. Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—Another part of the Wood.

Enter TITANIA, *with her Train.*

Tita. Come, now a roundel and a fairy song;
Then, for the third part of a minute, hence;
Some, to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds;
Some, war with rere-mice for their leathern wings
To make my small elves coats; and some, keep back
The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders
At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep;
Then to your offices, and let me rest.

FAIRIES' SONG.

1. Fai. You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedge-hogs, be not seen;
Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,
Come not near our fairy queen.

Chorus.

Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby
Never harm,
Nor spell nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So, good night, with lullaby.

II.

2. Fai. Weaving spiders, come not here;
Hence, you long-legged spinners, hence!
Beetles black, approach not near;
Worm nor snail do no offence.

Chorus.

Philomel, with melody, &c.

1. Fai. Hence, away! now all is well.
One, aloof, stand sentinel.

[*Exeunt Fairies.* TITANIA *sleeps.*

Enter OBERON, *and squeezes the flower on* TITANIA'S *eyelids.*

Obe. What thou seest, when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy true-love take;
Love, and languish for his sake:
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
Pard, or boar with bristled hair,
In thy eye that shall appear
When thou wak'st, it is thy dear:
Wake when some vile thing is near. [*Exit.*

Enter LYSANDER *and* HERMIA.

Lys. Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood;
And, to speak troth, I have forgot our way:
We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
And tarry for the comfort of the day.
Her. Be it so, Lysander: find you out a bed;
For I upon this bank will rest my head.
Lys. One turf shall serve as pillow for us both;
One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth.
Her. Nay, good Lysander; for my sake, my dear,
Lie further off yet, do not lie so near.
Lys. O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence!
Love takes the meaning in love's conference.
I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit,
So that but one heart we can make of it:
Two bosoms interchained with an oath;
So then, two bosoms and a single troth.
Then by your side no bed-room me deny,
For, lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.
Her. Lysander riddles very prettily:—
Now much beshrew my manners and my pride,
If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.
But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy

Lie further off, in human modesty :
Such separation as may well be said
Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,
So far be distant ; and good night, sweet friend :
Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end !

Lys. Amen, Amen, to that fair prayer, say I ;
And then end life when I end loyalty !
Here is my bed : sleep give thee all his rest !

Her. With half that wish the wisher's eyes be pressed ! [*They sleep.*

Enter PUCK.

Puck. Through the forest have I gone,
But Athenian found I none,
On whose eyes I might approve
This flower's force in stirring love.—
Night and silence ! Who is here ?
Weeds of Athens he doth wear :
This is he, my master said
Despiséd the Athenian maid ;
And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
On the dank and dirty ground.
Pretty soul ! she durst not lie
Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.
Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
All the power this charm doth owe.
When thou wak'st, let love forbid
Sleep his seat on thy eyelid :
So awake when I am gone ;
For I must now to Oberon. [*Exit.*

Enter DEMETRIUS *and* HELENA, *running.*

Hel. Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius

Dem. I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.

Hel. O, wilt thou darkling leave me ? do not so.

Dem. Stay, on thy peril : I alone will go. [*Exit.*

Hel. O, I am out of breath in this fond chase!
The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.
Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies;
For she hath blessèd and attractive eyes.
How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:
If so, my eyes are oftener washed than hers.
No, no, I am as ugly as a bear;
For beasts that meet me run away for fear:
Therefore no marvel though Demetrius
Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.
What wicked and dissembling glass of mine
Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne?—
But who is here?—Lysander! on the ground!
Dead? or asleep?—I see no blood, no wound.—
Lysander! If you live, good sir, awake.

Lys. [*Waking.*] And run through fire I will, for thy sweet sake.
Transparent Helena! Nature shows art,
That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.
Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

Hel. Do not say so, Lysander; say not so.
What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?
Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content.

Lys. Content with Hermia! No; I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
Not Hermia, but Helena now I love.
Who will not change a raven for a dove?
The will of man is by his reason swayed,
And reason says you are the worthier maid.
Things growing are not ripe until their season
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;
And touching now the point of human skill,
Reason becomes the marshal to my will,
And leads me to your eyes; where I o'erlook
Love's stories written in love's richest book.

Hel. Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?
Is 't not enough, is 't not enough, young man,
That I did never, no, nor never can,
Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,
But you must flout my insufficiency?
Good troth, you do me wrong,—good sooth, you do,—
In such disdainful manner me to woo
But fare you well: perforce I must confess
I thought you lord of more true gentleness.
O, that a lady of one man refused
Should of another therefore be abused! [*Exit.*

Lys. She sees not Hermia.—Hermia, sleep thou there:
And never may'st thou come Lysander near!
For, as a surfeit of the sweetest things
The deepest loathing to the stomach brings;
Or, as the heresies that men do leave
Are hated most of those they did deceive;
So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,
Of all be hated, but the most of me.
And, all my powers, address your love and might
To honour Helen, and to be her knight. [*Exit.*

Her. [*Awaking.*] Help me, Lysander, help me! do thy best,
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast!
Ay me, for pity!—what a dream was here!
Lysander, look how I do quake with fear.
Methought a serpent ate my heart away,
And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.—
Lysander! what, removed? Lysander! lord!—
What, out of hearing? gone? no sound? no word?
Alack! where are you? speak, an if you hear;
Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.
No?—then I well perceive you are not nigh:
Either death or you I'll find immediately. [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—The Wood. TITANIA lying asleep.

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, *and* STARVELING.

Bot. Are we all met?

Quin. Pat, pat; and here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house; and we will do it in action, as we will do it before the duke.

Bot. Peter Quince,—

Quin. What say'st thou, bully Bottom?

Bot. There are things in this comedy of 'Pyramus and Thisby,' that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself, which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that? 12

Snout. By 'r lakin, a parlous fear.

Star. I believe, we must leave the killing out, when all is done.

Bot. Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. ite me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to , we will do no harm with our swords, and that amus is not killed indeed; and, for the more ter assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not amus, but Bottom, the weaver. This will put them of fear. 21

Quin. Well, we will have such a prologue, and it shall be written in eight and six.

Bot. No, make it two more: let it be written in eight and eight.

Snout. Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

Star. I fear it, I promise you.

Bot. Masters, you ought to consider with your-es: to bring in,—God shield us!—a lion among es, is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a

more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living; and we ought to look to it.

Snout. Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

Bot. Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck; and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect,—'Ladies,' or, 'Fair ladies;—I would wish you,'—or, 'I would request you,'—or, 'I would entreat you,—not to fear, not to tremble: my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life: no, I am no such thing; I am a man as other men are:'—and there, indeed, let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug, the joiner.

Quin. Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things:—that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber; for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby meet by moonlight.

Snug. Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

Bot. A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanac; find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

Quin. Yes, it doth shine that night.

Bot. Why, then you may leave a casement of the great chamber-window, where we play, open; and the moon may shine in at the casement.

Quin. Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern, and say, he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of Moonshine.—Then, there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisby, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

Snug. You can never bring in a wall.—What say you, Bottom?

Bot. Some man or other must present Wall; and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall; and let him

hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper.

Quin. If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin. When you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake;—and so every one according to his cue.

Enter PUCK *behind.*

Puck. What hempen home-spuns have we swaggering here,
So near the cradle of the fairy queen?
What, a play toward? I'll be an auditor;
An actor too, perhaps, if I see cause.

Quin. Speak, Pyramus.—Thisby, stand forth.

Pyr. 'Thisby, the flowers of odious savours sweet,'—

Quin. 'Odours,' 'odours.'

Pyr.—'Odours savours sweet:
So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby, dear.
But, hark, a voice! stay thou but here awhile,
And by and by I will to thee appear.' [*Exit.*

Puck. A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here. [*Exit.*

This. Must I speak now?

Quin. Ay, marry, must you; for you must understand, he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

This. 'Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,
Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,
Most brisky juvenal, and eke most lovely Jew,
As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire,
I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.'

Quin. 'Ninus' tomb,' man. Why, you must not speak that yet; that you answer to Pyramus. You speak all your part at once, cues and all.—Pyramus, enter: your cue is past; it is 'never tire.'

Re-enter PUCK, *and* BOTTOM, *with an ass's head.*

This. O!—'As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.'

Pyr. 'If I were fair, Thisby, I were only thine.'—

Quin. O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted—Pray masters!—fly, masters!—help!

[*Exeunt Clowns.*

Puck. I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,

Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier:

Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,

A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;

And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,

Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.

[*Exit.*

Bot. Why do they run away? this is a knavery of them to make me afeard.

Re-enter SNOUT.

Snout. O Bottom! thou art changed! what do I see on thee? [*Exit.*

Bot. What do you see? you see an asshead of your own, do you?

Re-enter QUINCE.

Quin. Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated. [*Exit.*

Bot. I see their knavery. This is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can. I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid. [*Sings.*

The ousel-cock, so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill;
The throstle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill;—

Tita. [*Awaking.*] What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

Bot. The finch, the sparrow, and the lark
The plain-song cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer, nay;—

for, indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? who would give a bird the lie, though he cry 'cuckoo' never so?

Tita. I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:
Mine ear is much enamoured of thy note;
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
And thy fair virtue's force, perforce, doth move me
On the first view, to say, to swear, I love thee.

Bot. Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that: and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days:—the more the pity, that some honest neighbours will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion.

Tita. Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

Bot. Not so, neither; but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

Tita. Out of this wood do not desire to go:
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate,—
The summer still doth tend upon my state,—
And I do love thee: therefore, go with me;
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee;
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep:
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so,
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.—
Pease-blossom! Cobweb! Moth! and Mustard-seed!

Enter Four Fairies.

Peas. Ready.

Cob. And I.
Moth. And I.
Mus. And I.
All. Where shall we go?
Tita. Be kind and courteous to this gentleman:
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes;
Feed him with apricocks, and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;
The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eye
To have my love to bed, and to arise;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies
Peas. Hail, mortal!
Cob. Hail!
Moth. Hail!
Mus. Hail!
Bot. I cry your worships mercy, heartily.—I beseech your worship's name.
Cob. Cobweb.
Bot. I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb. If I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you. Your name, honest gentleman?
Peas. Pease-blossom.
Bot. I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. Good Master Pease-blossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too.—Your name, I beseech you, sir?
Mus. Mustard-seed.
Bot. Good Master Mustard-seed, I know your patience well: that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house. I promise you, your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire you more acquaintance, good Master Mustard-seed.

Tita. Come, wait upon him; lead him to
bower.
The moon, methinks, looks with a watery eye;
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
Lamenting some enforced chastity.
Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—Another Part of the Wood.

Enter OBERON.

Obe. I wonder if Titania be awaked;
Then, what it was that next came in her eye,
Which she must dote on in extremity.
Here comes my messenger.

Enter PUCK.

How now, mad spirit?
What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

Puck. My mistress with a monster is in love.
Near to her close and consecrated bower,
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,
Were met together to rehearse a play,
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.
The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,
Who Pyramus presented, in their sport,
Forsook his scene, and entered in a brake,
When I did him at this advantage take;
An ass's nowl I fixéd on his head:
Anon, his Thisby must be answered,
And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves, and madly sweep the sky,
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly,
And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls;

He murder cries, and help from Athens calls.
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong;
For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch;
Some, sleeves,—some, hats,—from yielders all things catch.
I led them on in this distracted fear,
And left sweet Pyramus translated there:
When in that moment—so it came to pass—
Titania waked, and straightway loved an ass.
Obe. This falls out better than I could devise.
But hast thou yet latched the Athenian's eyes
With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?
Puck. I took him sleeping—that is finished too—
And the Athenian woman by his side,
That, when he waked, of force she must be eyed.

Enter DEMETRIUS *and* HERMIA.

Obe. Stand close; this is the same Athenian.
Puck. This is the woman; but not this the man.
Dem. O, why rebuke you him that loves you so
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.
Her. Now I but chide; but I should use thee worse,
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,
And kill me too.
The sun was not so true unto the day
As he to me. Would he have stolen away
From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
This whole earth may be bored, and that the moon
May through the centre creep, and so displease
Her brother's noontide with the Antipodes.
It cannot be but thou hast murdered him;
So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.
Dem. So should the murdered look, and so should I

Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty;
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear,
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.
Her. What's this to my Lysander? where is he
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?
Dem. I had rather give his carcass to my hounds
Her. Out, dog! out, cur! thou driv'st me past the bounds
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him then?
Henceforth be never numbered among men!
O, once tell true, tell true, e'en for my sake.
Durst thou have looked upon him, being awake,
And hast thou killed him sleeping? O brave touch!
Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?
An adder did it; for with doubler tongue
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.
Dem. You spend your passion on a misprised mood
I am not guilty of Lysander's blood;
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.
Her. I pray thee, tell me then that he is well
Dem. An if I could, what should I get therefore?
Her. A privilege, never to see me more.—
And from thy hated presence part I so;
See me no more, whether he be dead or no. [*Exit*
Dem. There is no following her in this fierce vein
Here, therefore, for a while I will remain.
So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow
For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe
Which now in some slight measure it will pay,
If for his tender here I make some stay. [*Lies down.*
Obe. What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite,
And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight:
Of thy misprision must perforce ensue
Some true-love turned, and not a false turned true.
Puck. Then fate o'errules, that, one man holding troth,

A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

Obe. About the wood go swifter than the wind,
And Helena of Athens look thou find:
All fancy-sick she is, and pale of cheer
With sighs of love, that costs the fresh blood dear.
By some illusion see thou bring her here:
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

Puck. I go, I go; look how I go,— 100
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow. [*Exit.*

Obe. Flower of this purple die,
Hit with Cupid's archery,
Sink in apple of his eye!
When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.—
When thou wak'st, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

Re-enter PUCK.

Puck. Captain of our fairy band, 110
Helena is here at hand;
And the youth, mistook by me,
Pleading for a lover's fee.
Shall we their fond pageant see?—
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

Obe. Stand aside: the noise they make
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

Puck. Then will two at once woo one,—
That must needs be sport alone;
And those things do best please me 120
That befall preposterously.

Enter LYSANDER *and* HELENA.

Lys. Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
Scorn and derision never come in tears:
Look, when I vow, I weep; and vows so born,
In their nativity all truth appears.

How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge of faith to prove them true?
Hel. You do advance your cunning more and more.
When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray!
These vows are Hermia's: will you give her o'er?
Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh:
Your vows, to her and me, put in two scales,
Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.
Lys. I had no judgment, when to her I swore.
Hel. Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.
Lys. Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.
Dem. [*Awaking.*] O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!
That pure congealéd white, high Taurus' snow,
Fanned with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
When thou hold'st up thy hand. O, let me kiss
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!
Hel. O spite! O hell! I see, you all are bent
To set against me, for your merriment:
If you were civil and knew courtesy
You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
But you must join in souls to mock me too?
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so;
To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
You both are rivals, and love Hermia;
And now both rivals, to mock Helena:
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision! none of noble sort
Would so offend a virgin, and extort
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

Lys. You are unkind, Demetrius; be not so;
For you love Hermia; this you know I know:
And here, with all good will, with all my heart,
In Hermia's love I yield you up my part;
And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
Whom I do love, and will do till my death.
Hel. Never did mockers waste more idle breath.
Dem. Lysander, keep thy Hermia; I will none:
If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.
My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourned,
And now to Helen it is home returned,
There to remain.
Lys. Helen it is not so.
Dem. Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
Lest to thy peril thou aby it dear.—
Look, where thy love comes; yonder is thy dear.

Enter HERMIA.

Her. Dark night that from the eye his function takes,
The ear more quick of apprehension makes;
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
It pays the hearing double recompense.—
Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?
Lys. Why should he stay, whom love doth press to go?
Her. What love could press Lysander from my side?
Lys. Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night
Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.
Why seek'st thou me? could not this make thee know,
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?
Her. You speak not as you think: it cannot be.
Hel. Lo, she is one of this confederacy!

Now I perceive they have conjoined all three
To fashion this false sport in spite of me.
Injurious Hermia! most ungrateful maid!
Have you conspired, have you with these contrived
To bait me with this foul derision?
Is all the counsel that we two have shared,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us,—O, is all forgot?
All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence?
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds
Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet a union in partition;
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem;
So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart;
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
Due but to one, and crowned with one crest.
And will you rend our ancient love asunder,
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly:
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for 't,
Though I alone do feel the injury.

Her. I am amazed at your passionate words.
I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me.

Hel. Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
To follow me, and praise my eyes and face?
And made your other love, Demetrius,—
Who even but now did spurn me with his foot,—
To call me goddess, nymph, divine, and rare,
Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this
To her he hates? and wherefore doth Lysander
Deny your love, so rich within his soul,

And tender me, forsooth, affection,
But by your setting on, by your consent?
What though I be not so in grace as you,
So hung upon with love, so fortunate,
But miserable most to love unloved?
This you should pity rather than despise.
Her. I understand not what you mean by this.
Hel. Ay, do, persever, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back;
Wink at each other; hold the sweet jest up:
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument.
But, fare ye well: 'tis partly mine own fault,
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.
Lys. Stay, gentle Helena; hear my excuse:
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!
Hel. O excellent!
Her. Sweet, do not scorn her so.
Dem. If she cannot entreat, I can compel.
Lys. Thou canst compel no more than she entreat:
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers.—
Helen, I love thee; by my life, I do:
I swear by that which I will lose for thee,
To prove him false that says I love thee not.
Dem. I say, I love thee more than he can do.
Lys. If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.
Dem. Quick, come,—
Her. Lysander, whereto tends all this?
Lys. Away you Ethiop!
Dem. No, no, Sir;
Seem to break loose, take on as you would follow,
But yet come not.—You are a tame man, go!
Lys. Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! vile thing, let loose,
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.

Her. Why are you grown so rude? what change is this,
Sweet love?
Lys. Thy love? Out tawny Tartar, out!
Out, loathéd medicine! O hated poison, hence!
Her. Do you not jest?
Hel. Yes, sooth! and so do you!
Lys. Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.
Dem. I would I had your bond; for I perceive
A weak bond holds you; I'll not trust your word.
Lys. What? should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead!
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.
Her What can you do me greater harm than hate?
Hate me? wherefore? O me, what news, my love?
Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?
I am as fair now as I was erewhile.
Since night you loved me; yet, since night you left me.
Why, then you left me—O, the gods forbid!—
In earnest, shall I say?
Lys. Ay, by my life;
And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore, be out of hope, of question, doubt;
Be certain, nothing truer: 'tis no jest
That I do hate thee, and love Helena.
Her. O me!—you juggler! you canker-blossom!
You thief of love! what, have you come by night
And stol'n my love's heart from him?
Hel. Fine, i' faith!
Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet, you!
Her. 'Puppet!' why so; ay, that way goes the game:
Now I perceive that she hath made compare
Between our statures; she hath urged her height,

And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevailed with him.—
And are you grown so high in his esteem,
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak:
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

Hel. I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me: I was never curst
I have no gift at all in shrewishness;
I am a right maid for my cowardice:
Let her not strike me. You, perhaps, may think,
Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her.

Her. 'Lower!' hark, again.

Hel. Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wronged you;
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
I told him of your stealth unto this wood.
He followed you; for love, I followed him;
But he hath chid me hence, and threatened
To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too:
And now, so you will let me quiet go,
To Athens will I bear my folly back,
And follow you no further. Let me go:
You see how simple and how fond I am.

Her. Why, get you gone. Who is't that hinders you?

Hel. A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

Her. What, with Lysander?

Hel. With Demetrius.

Lys. Be not afraid: she shall not harm thee, Helena.

Dem. No, sir; she shall not, though you take her part.

Hel. O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd.
She was a vixen, when she went to school;
And, though she be but little, she is fierce.
Her. 'Little' again? nothing but 'low' and 'little!'—
Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
Let me come to her.
Lys. Get you gone, you dwarf;
You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made;
You bead, you acorn.
Dem. You are too officious
In her behalf that scorns your services.
Let her alone; speak not of Helena;
Take not her part; for if thou dost intend
Never so little show of love to her,
Thou shalt aby it.
Lys. Now she holds me not;
Now follow, if thou dar'st, to try whose right,
Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.
Dem. Follow? nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jowl. [*Exeunt* LYSANDER *and* DEMETRIUS.
Her. You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you.
Nay, go not back.
Hel. I will not trust you, I,
Nor longer stay in your curst company.
Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray;
My legs are longer though, to run away. [*Exit.*
Her. I am amazed, and know not what to say. [*Exit.*
Obe. This is thy negligence: still thou mistak'st,
Or else committ'st thy knaveries wilfully.
Puck. Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.
Did not you tell me, I should know the man
By the Athenian garments he had on?
And so far blameless proves my enterprise,
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes:
And so far am I glad it so did sort,

As this their jangling I esteem a sport.
Obe. Thou seest, these lovers seek a place to fight:
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night;
The starry welkin cover thou anon
With drooping fog, as black as Acheron;
And lead these testy rivals so astray,
As one come not within another's way.
Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong;
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius;
And from each other look thou lead them thus,
Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep:
Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye,
Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,
To take from thence all error with his might,
And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.
When they next wake, all this derision
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision;
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,
With league whose date till death shall never end.
Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,
I'll to my queen, and beg her Indian boy;
And then I will her charméd eye release
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.
Puck. My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
For Night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger,
At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyards; damnéd spirits all,
That in crossways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone;
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They wilfully themselves exile from light

And must for aye consort with black-browed night.

Obe. But we are spirits of another sort.
I with the morning's love have oft made sport;
And, like a forester, the groves may tread,
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessèd beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.
But, notwithstanding, haste; make no delay:
We may effect this business yet ere day. [*Exit.*

Puck. Up and down, up and down,
I will lead them up and down;
I am feared in field and town;
Goblin, lead them up and down.
Here comes one.

Re-enter LYSANDER.

Lys. Where art thou, proud Demetrius? speak thou now.

Puck. Here, villain! drawn and ready. Where art thou?

Lys. I will be with thee straight.

Puck. Follow me, then,
To plainer ground.

[*Exit* LYSANDER, *as following the voice.*

Re-enter DEMETRIUS.

Dem. Lysander, speak again.
Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?
Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?

Puck. Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,
And wilt not come? Come, recreant; come, thou child;
I'll whip thee with a rod. He is defiled
That draws a sword on thee.

Dem. Yea; art thou there?

Puck. Follow my voice: we'll try no manhood here. [*Exeunt.*

Re-enter LYSANDER.

Lys. He goes before me, and still dares me on;
When I come where he calls, then he is gone.
The villain is much lighter-heeled than I:
I followed fast, but faster he did fly,
[*Shifting places.*
That fallen am I in dark uneven way,
And here will rest me. [*Lies down.*] Come, thou gentle day!
For if but once thou show me thy grey light,
I'll find Demetrius, and revenge this spite. [*Sleeps.*

Re-enter PUCK *and* DEMETRIUS.

Puck. Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why com'st thou not?
Dem. Abide me, if thou dar'st; for well I wot,
Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,
And dar'st not stand, nor look me in the face.
Where art thou now!
Puck. Come hither: I am here.
Dem. Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this dear,
If ever I thy face by day-light see:
Now, go thy way. Faintness constraineth me
To measure out my length on this cold bed.
By day's approach look to be visited.
[*Lies down and sleeps.*

Re-enter HELENA.

Hel. O weary night, O long and tedious night,
Abate thy hours: shine, comforts, from the east,
That I may back to Athens, by day-light,
From these that my poor company detest.
And sleep that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,
Steal me awhile from mine own company. [*Sleeps.*

Puck. Yet but three? Come one more;
Two of both kinds makes up four.
Here she comes, curst and sad.
Cupid is a knavish lad,
Thus to make poor females mad.

Re-enter HERMIA.

Her. Never so weary, never so in woe,
Bedabbled with the dew, and torn with briers:
I can no further crawl, no further go:
My legs can keep no pace with my desires.
Here will I rest me till the break of day.
Heavens shield Lysander if they mean a fray!
[*Lies down.*

Puck. On the ground
Sleep sound:
I'll apply
Your eye,
Gentle lover, remedy.
[*Squeezing the juice on* LYSANDER'S *eye.*
When thou wak'st,
Thou tak'st
True delight
In the sight
Of thy former lady's eye:
And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own,
In your waking shall be shown:
Jack shall have Jill;
Nought shall go ill;
The man shall have his mare again,
And all shall be well. [*Exit* PUCK.

[*They sleep all the act.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—The Wood. DEMETRIUS, HELENA, LYSANDER, HERMIA, *lying asleep.*

Enter TITANIA *and* BOTTOM, *Fairies attending;* OBERON *behind unseen.*

Tita. Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

Bot. Where's Pease-blossom?

Peas. Ready.

Bot. Scratch my head, Pease-blossom. Where's Mounsieur Cobweb?

Cob. Ready.

Bot. Mounsieur Cobweb, good mounsieur, get your weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-hipped humble-bee, on the top of a thistle; and, good mounsieur, bring me the honey-bag. Do not fret yourself too much in the action, mounsieur; and, good mounsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not; I would be loath to have you over-flown with a honey-bag, signior.—Where's Mounsieur Mustard-seed?

Must. Ready.

Bot. Give me your neif, Mounsieur Mustard-seed. Pray you, leave your courtesy, good mounsieur.

Must. What's your will?

Bot. Nothing, good mounsieur, but to help Cavalery Pease-blossom to scratch. I must to the barber's, mounsieur; for, methinks, I am marvellous hairy about the face, and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch.

Tita. What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

Bot I have a reasonable good ear in music: let's have the tongs and the bones.

[*Music, Tongs, Rural Music.*

Tita. Or, say, sweet love, what thou desir'st to eat.

Bot Truly a peck of provender; I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks, I have a great desire to a bottle of hay; good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.

Tita. I have a venturous fairy that shall seek
The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee [thence] new nuts.

Bot I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me: I have an exposition of sleep come upon me.

Tita. Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.
Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away

[*Exeunt Fairies.*

So doth the woodbine the sweet honey-suckle
Gently entwist; the female ivy so
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm
O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee!

They sleep.

Enter PUCK.

Obe. [*Advancing.*] Welcome, good Robin. Seest thou this sweet sight?
Her dotage now I do begin to pity
For, meeting her of late behind the wood,
Seeking sweet favours for this hateful fool,
I did upbraid her, and fall out with her;
For she his hairy temples then had rounded
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds
Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,
Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes,
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.
When I had at my pleasure taunted her,
And she in mild terms begged my patience,
I then did ask of her her changeling child;

Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent
To bear him to my bower in fairy land.
And now I have the boy, I will undo
This hateful imperfection of her eyes:
And, gentle Puck, take this transformed scalp
From off the head of this Athenian swain,
That, he awaking when the other do,
May all to Athens back again repair,
And think no more of this night's accidents,
But as the fierce vexation of a dream:—
But first I will release the fairy queen.

[*Touching her eyes with an herb.*

Be, as thou wast wont to be;
See, as thou wast wont to see:
Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower
Hath such force and blessed power.
Now, my Titania, wake you, my sweet queen!

Tita. My Oberon! what visions have I seen!
Methought, I was enamoured of an ass.

Obe. There lies your love.

Tita. How came these things to pass?
O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!

Obe. Silence awhile.—Robin, take off this head.—
Titania, music call, and strike more dead
Than common sleep of all these five the sense.

Tita. Music, ho, music, such as charmeth sleep

[*Music, still.*

Puck. Now, when thou wak'st, with thine own fool's eyes peep.

[*Takes off the ass's head.*

Obe. Sound, music! Come, my queen, take hands with me,
And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.

[*Fairy Dance.*

Now thou and I are new in amity,
And will to-morrow midnight solemnly
Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly

And bless it to all fair prosperity.
There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be
Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.
Puck. Fairy king, attend, and mark,
I do hear the morning lark.
Obe. Then, my queen, in silence sad,
Trip we after night's shade;
We the globe can compass soon,
Swifter than the wandering moon.
Tita. Come, my lord, and in our flight
Tell me how it came this night,
That I sleeping here was found
With these mortals on the ground.

[*Exeunt Fairies. Sleepers lie still. Horns wind within.*

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, *and Train.*

The. Go, one of you, find out the forester,
For now our observation is performed;
And since we have the vaward of the day,
My love shall hear the music of my hounds.—
Uncouple in the western valley; let them go!—
Despatch, I say, and find the forester.—
We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top,
And mark the musical confusion
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.
Hip. I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
When, in a wood of Crete, they bayed the bear
With hounds of Sparta: never did I hear
Such gallant chiding; for, besides the groves,
The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seemed all one mutual cry. I never heard
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.
The. My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind
So flewed, so sanded; and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;
Crook-kneed, and dew-lapped like Thessalian bulls;

Slow in pursuit, but matched in mouth like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tuneable
Was never halloo'd to, nor cheered with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly:
Judge, when you hear.—But, soft! what nymphs are these?

Ege. My lord, this is my daughter here asleep;
And this, Lysander; this Demetrius is;
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena:
I wonder of their being here together.

The. No doubt, they rose up early, to observe
The rite of May, and, hearing our intent
Came here in grace of our solemnity.—
But speak, Egeus, is not this the day
That Hermia should give answer of her choice?

Ege. It is, my lord.

The. Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.

[*Horns, and shout within.* LYSANDER, HERMIA, DEMETRIUS, *and* HELENA, *wake and start up.*

The. Good morrow, friends. St. Valentine is past;
Begin these wood-birds but to couple now?

Lys. Pardon, my lord.

[*He and the rest kneel to* THESEUS.

The. I pray you all, stand up.
I know, you two are rival enemies:
How comes this gentle concord in the world,
That hatred is so far from jealousy,
To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity?

Lys. My lord, I shall reply amazedly,
Half sleep, half waking: but as yet, I swear,
I cannot truly say how I came here;
But, as I think—for truly would I speak,—
And now I do bethink me, so it is,—
I came with Hermia hither: our intent
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might

Without the peril of the Athenian law—
Ege. Enough, enough! my lord, you have enough:
I beg the law, the law, upon his head.
They would have stol'n away, they would, Demetrius,
Thereby to have defeated you and me;
You of your wife, and me of my consent,
Of my consent, that she should be your wife.
Dem. My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,
Of this their purpose hither, to this wood;
And I in fury hither followed them,
Fair Helena in fancy following me.
But, my good lord, I wot not by what power
My love to Hermia melted as the snow:
But by some power it is; seems to me now
As the remembrance of an idle gaud
Which in my childhood I did dote upon;
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
Was I betrothed ere I saw Hermia:
But, like a sickness, did I loathe this food
But, as in health, come to my natural taste,
Now do I wish it, love it, long for it,
And will for evermore be true to it.
The. Fair lovers, you are fortunately met.
Of this discourse we more will hear anon.
Egeus, I will overbear your will,
For in the temple, by and by, with us,
These couples shall eternally be knit.
And, for the morning now is something worn,
Our purposed hunting shall be set aside.
Away, with us, to Athens! Three and three,
We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.—
Come, Hippolyta.
[*Exeunt* THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, *and Train.*
Dem. These things seem small and undistinguishable,

Like far-off mountains turnéd into clouds.

Her. Methinks, I see these things with parted eye,
When every thing seems double.

Hel. So methinks:
And I have found Demetrius, like a jewel,
Mine own, and not mine own.

Dem. It seems to me
That yet we sleep, we dream.—Do not you think
The duke was here, and bid us follow him?

Her. Yea, and my father.

Hel. And Hippolyta.

Lys. And he did bid us follow to the temple.

Dem. Why then, we are awake. Let's follow him;
And by the way let us recount our dreams.
[*Exeunt.*

Bot. [*Waking.*] When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer:—my next is, 'Most fair Pyramus.'—Hey, ho!—Peter Quince! Flute, the bellows-mender! Snout, the tinker! Starveling! God's my life, stolen hence, and left me asleep.—I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream,—past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, and methought I had,—but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the duke: peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—Athens. A Room in QUINCE'S House.

Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, *and* STARVELING.

Quin. Have you sent to Bottom's house? is he come home yet?

Star. He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt, he is transported.

Flu. If he come not, then the play is marred. It goes not forward, doth it?

Quin. It is not possible: you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus, but he.

Flu. No; he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens.

Quin. Yea, and the best person too; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

Flu. You must say, paragon: a paramour is, God bless us! a thing of naught. 14

Enter SNUG.

Snug. Masters, the duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married. If our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men.

Flu. O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life; he could not have scaped sixpence a day: an the duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged; he would have deserved it: sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing. 24

Enter BOTTOM.

Bot. Where are these lads? where are these hearts?

Quin. Bottom!—O most courageous day! O most happy hour!

Bot. Masters, I am to discourse wonders; but ask me not what; for, if I tell you, I am no true Athenian, I will tell you every thing, right as it fell out.

Quin. Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

Bot. Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, that the duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps: meet presently at the palace; every man look o'er his part; for the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisby have clean linen, and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for, they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions, nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath, and I do not doubt, but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words: away! go away! [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—ATHENS. An Apartment in the Palace of THESEUS.

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, *Lords, and Attendants.*

Hip. 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

The. More strange than true: I never may believe
These antic fables nor these fairy toys:
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination all compact:
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold
That is the madman: the lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination,
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy:
Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush suppos'd a bear?

Hip. But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds transfigured so together,
More witnesseth than fancy's images,
And grows to something of great constancy;
But, howsoever, strange, and admirable.

The. Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.

Enter LYSANDER, HERMIA, DEMETRIUS, *and* HELENA.

Joy, gentle friends! joy, and fresh days of love
Accompany your hearts!
Lys. More than to us
Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed!
The. Come now; what masques, what dances shall we have,
To wear away this long age of three hours
Between our after-supper and bed-time?
Where is our usual manager of mirth?
What revels are in hand? Is there no play,
To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?
Call Philostrate.
Phil. Here, mighty Theseus.
The. Say, what abridgment have you for this evening?
What masque? what music? How shall we beguile
The lazy time, if not with some delight?
Phil. There is a brief how many sports are ripe;
Make choice of which your highness will see first.
[*Giving a paper.*
The. [*Reads.*] 'The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.'
We 'll none of that: that have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.
'The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage.'
That is an old device; and it was played
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.
'The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
Of Learning, late deceased in beggary.'
That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.
'A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus,
And his love Thisby; very tragical mirth.

Merry and tragical! Tedious and brief!
That is, hot ice, and wondrous flaming snow.
How shall we find the concord of this discord?
Phil. A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,
Which is as brief as I have known a play;
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,
Which makes it tedious; for in all the play
There is not one word apt, one player fitted.
And tragical, my noble lord, it is,
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.
Which when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,
Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears
The passion of loud laughter never shed.
The. What are they that do play it?
Phil. Hard-handed men, that work in Athens here,
Which never laboured in their minds till now,
And now have toiled their unbreathed memories
With this same play against your nuptial.
The. And we will hear it.
Phil. No, my noble lord,
It is not for you: I have heard it over,
And it is nothing, nothing in the world,
Unless you can find sport in their intents,
Extremely stretched and conned with cruel pain,
To do you service.
The. I will hear that play:
For never anything can be amiss
When simpleness and duty tender it.
Go, bring them in;—and take your places, ladies.
[*Exit* PHILOSTRATE.
Hip. I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharged,
And duty in his service perishing.
The. Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.
Hip. He says, they can do nothing in this kind.
The. The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.

Our sport shall be to take what they mistake:
And what poor duty cannot do,
Noble respect takes it in might, not merit.
Where I have come, great clerks have purposéd
To greet me with premeditated welcomes;
Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
Make periods in the midst of sentences,
Throttle their practised accent in their fears,
And, in conclusion, dumbly have broke off,
Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,
Out of this silence yet I picked a welcome;
And in the modesty of fearful duty
I read as much as from the rattling tongue
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity,
In least speak most, to my capacity.

Re-enter PHILOSTRATE.

Phil. So please your grace, the Prologue is addrest.

The. Let him approach. [*Flourish of Trumpets.*

Enter the Prologue.

Prol. 'If we offend, it is with our good will.
That you should think, we come not to offend,
But with good will. To show our simple skill,
That is the true beginning of our end.'
Consider then, we come but in despite.
We do not come as minding to content you,
Our true intent is. All for your delight,
We are not here. That you should here repent you,
The actors are at hand; and, by their show,
You shall know all that you are like to know.'

The. This fellow doth not stand upon points.

Lys. He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt; he knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is not enough to speak, but to speak true.

Hip. Indeed, he hath played on his prologue like a child on a recorder; a sound, but not in government.

The. His speech was like a tangled chain; nothing impaired, but all disordered—who is next?

Enter Presenter, PYRAMUS *and* THISBY, *Wall, Moonshine, and Lion.*

Pres. 'Gentles, perchance, you wonder at this show;
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.
This man is Pyramus, if you would know;
This beauteous lady Thisby is, certain.
This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present
Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder;
And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content
To whisper, at the which let no man wonder.
This man, with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn,
Presenteth Moonshine; for, if you will know,
By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn
To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.
This grisly beast, which Lion hight by name,
The trusty Thisby, coming first by night,
Did scare away, or rather did affright;
And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,
Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.
Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,
And finds his trusty Thisby's mantle slain:
Whereat with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast;
And Thisby, tarrying in mulberry shade,
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain,
At large discourse, while here they do remain.'

[*Exeunt Pres.*, PYR., THIS., *Lion and Moonshine.*

The. I wonder, if the lion be to speak.

Dem. No wonder, my lord: one lion may, when many asses do.

Wall. 'In this same interlude it doth befall,
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall;
And such a wall, as I would have you think,
That had in it a crannied hole, or chink,
Through which the lovers, Pyr'mus and Thisby,
Did whisper often very secretly.
This lime, this rough-cast, and this stone, doth show
That I am that same wall; the truth is so;
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.'

The. Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?

Dem. It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse, my lord.

The. Pyramus draws near the wall: silence!

Enter PYRAMUS.

Pyr. 'O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!
O night, which ever art, when day is not!
O night! O night! alack, alack, alack!
I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot.—
And thou, O wall! O sweet, O lovely wall,
That stand'st between her father's ground and mine;
Thou wall, O wall! O sweet and lovely wall!
Show me thy chink to blink through with mine eyne.
[*Wall holds up his fingers.*
Thanks, courteous wall: Jove shield thee well for this!
But what see I? No Thisby do I see.
O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss;
Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!'

The. The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.

Pyr. No, in truth, sir, he should not.—'Deceiving me,' is Thisby's cue: she is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as I told you.—Yonder she comes.

Enter THISBY.

This. 'O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,
For parting my fair Pyramus and me:
My cherry lips have often kissed thy stones,
Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.'

Pyr. 'I see a voice: now will I to the chink,
To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face.
Thisby!'

This. 'My love! thou art my love, I think.'

Pyr. 'Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace;
And like Limander am I trusty still.'

This. 'And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.'

Pyr. 'Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.'

This. 'As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.'

Pyr. 'O! kiss me through the hole of this vile wall.'

This. 'I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.'

Pyr. 'Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straigh way?'

This. ''Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay.'

Wall. 'Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so;
And, being done, thus Wall away doth go.'

[*Exeunt Wall,* PYRAMUS *and* THISBY.

The. Now is the moral down between the two neighbours.

Dem. No remedy, my lord, when walls are so wilful to hear without warning.

Hip. This is the silliest stuff that e'er I heard.

The. The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

Hip. It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

The. If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.

Enter Lion and Moonshine.

Lion. 'You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am
A lion fell, nor else no lion's dam:
For, if I should as lion come in strife
Into this place, 't were pity on my life.'

The. A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.

Dem. The very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er I saw.

Lys. This lion is a very fox for his valour.

The. True; and a goose for his discretion.

Dem. Not so, my lord: for his valour cannot carry his discretion, and the fox carries the goose.

The. His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valour, for the goose carries not the fox. It is well; leave it to his discretion, and let us listen to the moon.

Moon. 'This lantern doth the horned moon present.'

Dem. He should have worn the horns on his head.

The. He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible within the circumference.

Moon. 'This lantern doth the horned moon present;
Myself the man i' the moon do seem to be.'

The. This is the greatest error of all the rest. The man should be put into the lantern: how is it else the man i' the moon?

Dem. He dares not come there for the candle; for, you see, it is already in snuff.

Hip. I am aweary of this moon: would he would change!

The. It appears by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

Lys. Proceed, Moon.

Moon. 'All that I have to say is, to tell you, that the lantern is the moon; I, the man in the moon; this thorn-bush, my thorn-bush; and this dog, my dog.'

Dem. Why, all these should be in the lantern; for all these are in the moon. But, silence! here comes Thisby.

Enter THISBY.

This. 'This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love?'

Lion. 'Oh————!'

[*The Lion roars.*—THISBY *runs off.*

Dem. Well roared, Lion.

The. Well run, Thisby.

Hip. Well shone, Moon.—Truly, the moon shines with a good grace.

[*The Lion tears* THISBY'S *mantle, and exit.*

The. Well moused, Lion.

Dem. And then came Pyramus.

Lys. And so the lion vanished.

Enter PYRAMUS.

Pyr. 'Sweet moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams:
I thank thee, moon, for shining now so bright.
For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,
I trust to taste of truest Thisby's sight.
But stay;—O spite!—
But mark, poor knight,
What dreadful dole is here?
Eyes, do you see?
How can it be?
O dainty duck! O dear!
Thy mantle good,
What, stained with blood:
Approach, ye Furies fell!

O Fates, come, come:
Cut thread and thrum;
Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!'

The. This passion, and the death of a dear friend, would go near to make a man look sad.

Hip. Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

Pyr. 'O, wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame,
Since lion vile hath here defloured my dear?
Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame,
That liv'd, that lov'd, that lik'd, that look'd with cheer.
Come, tears, confound;
Out, sword, and wound
The pap of Pyramus:
Ay, that left pap,
Where heart doth hop:— [*Stabs.*
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus!
Now am I dead;
Now am I fled;
My soul is in the sky:
Tongue, lose thy light!
Moon, take thy flight! [*Exit Moonshine.*
Now die, die, die, die, die.' [*Dies.*

Dem. No die, but an ace, for him; for he is but one.

Lys. Less than an ace, man, for he is dead; he is nothing.

The. With the help of a surgeon, he might yet recover, and prove an ass.

Hip. How chance Moonshine is gone, before Thisby comes back and finds her lover?

The. She will find him by starlight.—Here she comes, and her passion ends the play.

Enter THISBY.

Hip. Methinks, she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus; I hope she will be brief.

Dem. A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus, which Thisby, is the better; he for a man, God warrant us; she for a woman, God bless us.

Lys. She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

Dem. And thus she means, *videlicet*:—

This. 'Asleep, my love?
What, dead, my dove?
O Pyramus, arise!
Speak, speak! Quite dumb?
Dead, dead? A tomb
Must cover thy sweet eyes.
These lily lips,
This cherry nose,
These yellow cowslip cheeks,
Are gone, are gone!
Lovers, make moan!
His eyes were green as leeks.
O Sisters Three,
Come, come to me,
With hands as pale as milk;
Lay them in gore,
Since you have shore
With shears his thread of silk.
Tongue, not a word:
Come, trusty sword;
Come, blade, my breast imbrue: [*Stabs.*
And farewell, friends.—
Thus Thisby ends:—
Adieu, adieu, adieu.' [*Dies.*

The. Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

Dem. Ay, and Wall too.

Bot. No, I assure you: the wall is down, that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance between two of our company.

The. No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse; for when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had play'd Pyramus, and hanged himself in Thisby's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy:—and so it is, truly; and very notably discharged. But come, your Bergomask: let your epilogue alone. [*A dance.*

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve.—
Lovers, to bed: 't is almost fairy time.
I fear we shall outsleep the coming morn,
As much as we this night have overwatched.
This palpable gross play hath well beguiled
The heavy gate of night.—Sweet friends, to bed.—
A fortnight hold we this solemnity
In nightly revels and new jollity. [*Exeunt.*

Enter PUCK, *with a broom.*

Puck. Now the hungry lion roars,
And the wolf behowls the moon;
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
All with weary task fordone.
Now the wasted brands do glow,
Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud
Puts the wretch, that lies in woe,
In remembrance of a shroud.
Now it is the time of night,
That the graves, all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the church-way paths to glide:
And we fairies, that do run
By the triple Hecate's team,
From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic; not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallow'd house:
I am sent with broom before,
To sweep the dust behind the door.

Enter OBERON *and* TITANIA, *with their Train.*

Obe. Through the house give glimmering light
By the dead and drowsy fire;
Every elf and fairy sprite
Hop as light as bird from brier:
And this ditty, after me,
Sing, and dance it trippingly.

Tita. First, rehearse your song by rote,
To each word a warbling note:
Hand in hand, with fairy grace,
Will we sing, and bless this place.
[*Song and dance.*

Obe. Now, until the break of day,
Through this house each fairy stray.
To the best bride-bed will we,
Which by us shall blessèd be;
And the issue there create
Ever shall be fortunate.
So shall all the couples three
Ever true in loving be;
And the blots of Nature's hand
Shall not in their issue stand;
Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar,
Nor mark prodigious, such as are
Despiséd in nativity,
Shall upon their children be.
With this field-dew consecrate,
Every fairy take his gate,
And each several chamber bless,
Through this palace, with sweet peace;
And the owner of it blest
Ever shall in safety rest.
Trip away;
Make no stay;
Meet me all by break of day.
[*Exeunt* OBERON, TITANIA, *and Train.*

Puck. If we shadows have offended,
Think but this (and all is mended)
That you have but slumbered here,
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend:
If you pardon, we will mend.
And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearnéd luck
Now to scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long,
Else the Puck a liar call:
So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.

[*Exit.*

NOTES.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

In the following notes references are made to the original editions of the play. These are three; two quartos and the First Folio: (1) Fisher's Quarto known as the first quarto, 1600 A.D.: (2) Roberts' Quarto or the second quarto (also 1600): (3) the Folio edition of Shakespeare's works (1623); of which reprints with slight corrections or modifications were issued as the Second Folio (1632), the Third Folio (1664) and the Fourth Folio (1685). A special copy of the Second Folio with manuscript annotations was in the possession of Collier and is occasionally referred to as the Collier MS. These annotations may or may not represent original knowledge.

The fundamental edition of Shakespeare's works is the First Folio issued in 1623 under the editorship of Heminge and Condell. In the case of this play it is based (as is believed) on the Second Quarto, but it contains emendations which in some cases may be due to Shakespeare himself. There is also strong evidence that it was printed from a stage or players' copy. Of the two quartos (*i.e.*, editions of this play only, in *quarto* form and size), Fisher's was entered and licensed by the Master Wardens of the Stationers' Company, 8th October 1600, or a little after the middle of the year as the year was then reckoned. Roberts' edition was not registered or licensed. The issuing of two editions in one year points to a considerable demand for a popular play. Which edition was prior in publication is unknown. But notwithstanding variations they represent one text, and correspond line by line throughout. Their chief differences are due to the compositors. The spelling in the first quarto is archaic, in the second comparatively modern. The second is superior also in type and in stage-directions, but inferior in text and punctuation. The editors of the Folio printed from a copy which probably contained, in addition to clear type, marginal corrections and explanations long recognised on the stage and in some measure derived from the poet himself.

NOTES.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

In the quarto editions of this play there are no divisions into Acts or Scenes. The division into Acts is made in the first folio; the Scenes were marked later by Capell. The stage-direction here was simply: *Enter, Theseus, Hippolyta with others.* The modification is due to Theobald. For the *characters* see Introduction.

1. **Fair**—The old conventional epithet meaning beautiful. **Our nuptial hour**—The date of our marriage. By the figure of synecdoche 'hour' may be used either for the decisive minute or for the whole period of the celebration. The Lat. *nupta* (like the Gr. *numphe*) meant a 'veiled one', hence a bride. The plural subst. *nuptiae* like the English 'nuptials' meant a wedding.

2. **Draws on**—Is approaching. The verb is here intrans. According to the original genius of the English language many verbs could be used both transitively and intransitively. 'Draw' and 'drag' are both forms of the A.S. *dragan*. 'On' is an adverb; so also 'in' in this line; and examples are frequent. The practice in modern prose is to use by preference words of Latin origin; as approach instead of draw on, introduce instead of bring in.

Apace—Rapidly. 'Apace' is a compound word, for *a pace*, =at a pace, *i.e.*, walking. A 'pace' was the space covered by one foot-step. Originally (as in *Chaucer*) the adverb meant slowly, in Shakespeare it usually means quickly. Here the idea of regularity or gradual approach may be combined with that of welcome speed.

Happy days—By the figure of Hypallage, or of Transferred Epithet, the happiness of the expectant lovers is transferred to the time through which they are passing. The student will note that these four days which constitute the time of the action of the play are by a dramatic fiction supposed to be spent in one evening. But on this question of time, see *Introduction.*

3. **Another moon**—Or the new moon. Thus, unscientifically, popular speech describes the reappearance of the moon after its apparent waning and vanishing. *Primâ facie* this indicates that the moon is half through its last quarter, and

therefore that there can be no moonlight except in the early morning. The point, however, is beset with difficulties, and it is doubtful if the play is self-consistent. See lines 10, 209, II. i. 141, III. i. 184, and notes thereon. Further, if this new moon is to be identified with May-day (IV. i. 130.), the action of the play is thus defined as commencing on the 27th April. It is believed that the play was originally acted at a May-day festival or marriage. It is also noted that in the year 1592 May-day and the day of new moon coincided. It is just possible that 'moon' here has no direct reference to the planet, but is used (as was habitual in popular speech) by metonymy for 'month.' See line 10.

Methinks—It seems to me. This is one of the very few surviving impersonal forms. 'Me' is in the Dat. case. This verb 'think' (A.S. *thyncan*) was originally distinct from the ordinary 'think,' (A.S. *thencan*). As the use of the term is parenthetical it does not affect the construction of the sentence; 'how' introduces a principal, not a subordinate clause.

Slow—Adverb; = slowly. The ejaculation in this sentence is intended to assure Hippolyta of the ardour of her royal lover to whom the swiftness of time seems slow.

4. **Wanes**—Decreases; the opposite of 'waxes.' This term is little used except of the declining moon. The root-idea is deficiency; akin to 'want' which is a Scandinavian form.

She—This pronoun is justified by the semi-personification of the moon, which is made responsible for the movement of time and the feelings of the speaker. In English as in other languages, gender did not originally depend on natural conditions, and the poetic habit of describing the sun and moon as respectively masculine and feminine is to some extent a survival of the primitive barbarism which imputed sex to natural objects.

Lingers—Delays the fulfilment (or realisation) of. This transitive use of a verb which a little later became purely intransitive illustrates the unsettled state of the language in the Elizabethan age. 'Linger' is a frequentative form derived from an obsolete form *lengen* which was a transitive verb formed from the adj. 'long.'

5. **Like**—Introducing a comparison or simile. In prose the sentence would be written: as a step-dame.....withers. The comparison maintains the semi-personification of the noon.

Step-dame—Step-mother; second wife of one's father. Step—, originally meaning 'orphaned,' as in A.S. *steop-cild*, is

now used more generally to denote relationship, not of blood but of marriage. 'Dame' was a term of dignity used of a married lady; abbreviated from Lat. *domina*, fem. of *dominus*, lord.

Dowager—The father's widow (whether the actual mother or not) on whom a dowage or jointure has been settled. 'Dowage' is akin to dowry, endowment (Lat. *dotare, dos.*) In present day usage 'dowager' is mainly an indication of rank. The widow of a peer retains her title with the word dowager added, her former position having passed to the wife of her husband's eldest son. Thus when a Duke dies his widow is distinguished from the new duchess as the duchess-dowager.

6. **Withering out**—Drying up, causing to shrink, diminishing 'Wither' describes the effect of exposure to weather. The use here is, therefore, metaphorical. The adverb intensifies the meaning.

Revenue—Income obtained by inheritance. The jointure of a long-lived widow either lessens the heir's annual income during her life-time or diminishes the total value of his property.

7. **Steep**—The day passes into night and is lost to view as an object which sinks in water disappears. The metaphor is derived from the conception of the sun, the representative of day, as setting over the ocean and sinking (apparently) into its waters: as in Milton's *Comus*—

> And the gilded car of day
> His glowing axle doth allay
> In the steep Atlantic stream.

Nights—The reading of the first quarto is 'night.' The singular and abstract; of the second quarto and the folios (thence derived) 'nights,' the plural and concrete. The abstract would be preferable if only the general fact of the progress of time were in view, but Hippolyta is probably thinking of the stages in detail.

8. **Dream**—The figure is Hypallage rather than Personification—the dreaming being transferred from the happy lovers to the time of their dreams. Further, the term dream (according to a familiar metaphorical application) connotes the rapidity of time's advance; (*cf.* line 144). Hippolyta, in contrast to Theseus, speaks as brightly as possible regarding the necessary delay.

Away—Adverb, completing the idea expressed by dream, as 'out' in line 6.

Time—Cognate Accusative; or the combination, 'dream away,' may be regarded as a Transitive verb.

9. **Then**—Immediately, thereafter. The marriage is to take place in four days, on the first evening of the new moon or month.

Like.. ...bow—In appearance resembling a bow made of silver. The metal silver is specified because of its white colour. In line 210 the word is used of colour only; and so often in the poets. The comparison to a bow is carried farther when the rays are metaphorically styled arrows; as in Shelley's *Skylark*: keen as are the arrows of that silver sphere. 'Silver bow' may here be regarded as a literal (not figurative) comparison describing the apparent shape and pale brightness of the crescent moon.

10. **New-bent**—'New' is Rowe's accepted correction of the 'now' of the original editions. It accords with the supposition that the night of the new moon is the date intended. 'Now' is the word from which 'new' is derived and it possibly had the meaning 'newly.' It was pronounced *noo* and the similarity (if not identity) of sound occasioned frequent confusion of the two words. In the change therefore from 'now' to 'new' there may be no real change of meaning. (The hyphen is due to Dyce.)

It is, however, surely possible that the words 'now bent' have their ordinary signification and indicate that already, while Hippolyta is speaking, the new moon is in the sky. In England the new moon becomes visible as a bow or slender crescent about the third evening; and if we assume that at the commencement of the play the moon is already four days old, then on the night of the marriage it will be eight days old and will shine as a semi-circle in the heavens. On this view the language in lines 209-210 and III. i. 182 is no longer purely conventional. This view, however, requires that in line 8 moon should be regarded as equivalent to month.

Or it may be argued that Shakespeare was sublimely indifferent to mechanical accuracy; that he meant his play to be acted in all seasons, and cared not to confine it to one condition of the moon; that he thought of his audience and not his critics, and used the imagery of poetry according to his convenience. Or again that the play (like most of Shakespeare's earlier plays) is composite, having been begun on one plan and finished on another; or that certain phrases have reference to Greek ideas and others to English. On the whole we think 'now bent' should be retained.

In heaven—In the sky. The phrase is perhaps intended to

the time of Shakespeare the word was used in nearly the same sense, though often specifically in the sense of tournament. A triumph was thus a sumptuous pageant or show which involved either heroic martial exercises or grand performances with gorgeous display of colour and architecture. In *L'Allegro*, 119—124, it is used of a grand tournament of arms or wit where queens of beauty preside. *Revelling* refers to what was technically known as *revels*, which were in-door evening performances at court or in the houses of the nobility, consisting chiefly of music, dancing and theatrical devices. See V. i. 36 and following. In the generation after Shakespeare, 'revels' gave place as State performances to Entertainments and Masques. In this play the term describes the ludicrous dramatic performance given in Act V.

20. **Happy be**—A form of salutation.

Renowned duke—Famous leader. The word duke (O.F. *duc*, Lat. *dux*, *ducem*) like the words prince (*i.e.* first) or chief (*i.e.*, head) may be used of the highest officer of a country whatever be his specific designation. In Venice the head of the Republic was in the mediæval period styled *doge* which was a form of the same word. In England now the term is confined to the highest order of the nobility and is not applied to the sovereign.

21. **Thanks**—Elliptical for "I give you thanks.' Compliments are reciprocated.

Egeus—Accented on the middle syllable. The name is found in Plutarch.

What's the news. .. ? What is new with you? or what hast thou come to lay before me?

22. **Vexation**—Grief; with stronger meaning than the word bears now.

Complaint—A technical term implying that Egeus is lodging a complaint before the legal authorities.

23. **Child**—This term does not imply extreme youth. Parents frequently use the term of grown-up sons and daughters.

24. **Stand forth Demetrius**—These words and the corresponding expressions in line 26 are apparently uttered by Egeus, who to make his position clear to Theseus thus orders the young men successively. The early editions printed them as stage-directions and not as part of the text, but they are necessary metrically, and moreover we may assume that Lysander would not have stood forward to be censured had he not been directly ordered to do so.

My noble lord—Shakespeare uses the form of words used

in addressing an English peer. But the term 'lord' in the general sense of master or chief was legitimate; even as we still say 'our sovereign lady, Queen Victoria.'

25. **To marry**—That he may marry; gerundial infinitive.

26. **Gracious duke**—The epithet 'gracious' is applied only to the sovereign, but the substantive 'grace' (in the expressions 'his grace,' 'your grace') though once applied to kings is now used only of dukes and archbishops. 'Duke' here means sovereign, and therefore the epithet is conventional as well as complimentary.

27. **Witched**—Bewitched, charmed, obtained power over. Witchery denoted some magical influence. The earliest reading was 'this man hath bewitched' where it might seem that either the second or the fourth syllable must be omitted. The text is Theobald's emendation. The later folios omitted 'man.' It is, however, probable that 'man hath' (*i.e.*, man'th) was pronounced as one syllable, and that 'bewitched' should stand.

Bosom—Heart. Seat of the affections. The use of bosom for affections is perhaps the figure of Metonymy (container for thing contained.) Cf. below II. ii. 42—50.

28. Verses 28—38 are again addressed directly to Lysander. Egeus in his indignation is supposed to be unconscious of departing from the proprieties of address in a ruler's presence.

Rhymes—Love-verses which apparently are regarded as having a mysterious efficacy like incantations. Rhyme is an old English word and should be written *rime* and not as if derived from a Greek form.

Interchanged—This implies that the love has been returned, though in what manner is not stated.

Love-tokens—Gifts that are evidences of love, favours. The rhymes are again described in verses 30, 31, and the love-tokens are specified in verses 33—35.

30. This is the manner of serenading. Milton refers to it with scorn in *Paradise Lost*, IV. 769-70—

> "Or serenate which the starved lover sings
> To his proud fair, best quitted with disdain.

A serenade song by Shelley is given in the *Golden Treasury*.

31. **Faining**—The correct word is faining, not feigning. It is the participle of the obsolete verb *fain*, to desire, long for. Most editors, since Rowe, have changed the text to 'feigning,' but Egeus does not seem to doubt the sincerity of Lysander's love; and if he did we would expect *feigned* and not the

active participle which could reasonably qualify only the person, not his voice or feeling.

32. **Stolen the**.....The meaning is thou hast without right or warrant obtained possession of her affections, induced her to fall in love with thee. The idea in **stolen** is of what is done not so much secretly as unauthorisedly and without permission of her guardians. **Impression** means print or imprinting. **Fantasy** is the old and original form of fancy (Gr. *phantasia*). 'Fancy' bore in the seventeenth century the meaning now expressed by imagination, but was mainly used by the Elizabethan poets in the sense of love; as in 155, II. i. 164, III. ii. 96, IV. v. 160, and in the verses in the *Merchant of Venice*—

> Tell me where is fancy fed,
> In the heart or in the head,
> How begot, how nourished;
> It is engendered in the eyes,
> With gazing fed: and fancy dies
> In the cradle where it lies.

'Fantasy,' on the other hand, was generally used of strange fancies, unreal visions. See V. i. 5, where it is used of the lover and the madman in correspondence to the imagination of the poet; or Milton's *Comus*. 205, where it is descriptive of 'calling shapes' and 'beckoning shadows' and 'airy tongues.' In both cases in this play it is used of a mental faculty (not as in *Milton* of the products thereof) and also of a lover. It thus denotes an active, excitable, love-sick imagination. Here it must mean the faculty which admires and loves as well as fancies, or what is called the heart. The meaning then is that Lysander has unjustifiably succeeded in stamping himself on the impressionable heart and mind of the maiden, so that his image is cherished in her heart. He has won for himself the affections and desires of her heart.

33. **Bracelets of thy hair**—In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gallants wore long hair, or what were called lovelocks. From these locks Lysander made bracelets which as love-tokens he presented to Hermia to be worn on her arms.

Gauds—Bright ornaments; lit. 'joys.' Same root as jewels. (Lat. *gaudium*).

Conceits—Clever devices, expressive of some idea, or conception or fanciful suggestion; ornaments or other articles ingeniously made.

34. **Knacks**—Trifles or toys; now called knick-knacks.

Nosegays—Bouquets of fragrant flowers. A compound word.

Sweetmeats—The love-tokens seem arranged in an anti-climax. Egeus desires to show that Lysander appealed to every sense, including not only sight and fancy, but smell and taste.

Messengers—The little gifts are metaphorically described as messengers of communication between the mind of Lysander and the heart of Hermia. Derived from 'message' with insertion of *n*. So *passenger*. Lat. *mitto*.

35. **Of strong prevailment**—Very effective. 'Prevailment' is a sort of verbal noun.

Unhardened—Still soft. This is why Lysander was able to make the impression. Shakespeare was perhaps thinking of soft wax on which a seal is easily imprinted. Hermia's young heart was overcome by petty trifles.

36. **With cunning**—The root meaning of cunning is 'knowing.' Lysander knew the effects of love-presents and thus took advantage of the girl.

Filched—Stolen. The root idea is concealment. *Cf.* in *Othello*—

> He that filches from me my good name
> Robs me of that which not enriches him.

38. **Stubborn harshness**—Self-willed disregard, the opposite of filial submission. Stubborn was originally an adj. formed from 'stub' to which the final *n* was added by mistake. It meant, like a stub or stock.

39. **Be it so she**—If it be the case that she. So = thus, or in this way.

40. **Marry with**—Marry is used intransitively. The same meaning would be expressed by the substitution of the noun marriage. Present day idiom regards 'marry' as an ordinary transitive verb.

41. **Ancient**—Of long standing; not what existed long ago, but what still exists. So III. ii. 215.

Privilege of Athens—Right belonging to the free citizens of Athens. Privilege denotes some right or advantage possessed by some favoured class. Originally, in Rome, *privilegium* was used of a law regarding an individual. (Lat. *privus*, single; *lex*, law.)

42. **As**—Inasmuch as, since.

Mine—My property, and not merely my daughter; that over which I have absolute right or power.

I may dispose of—(I beg that) I may. To dispose of is to

make final arrangements of any kind; here, get rid of her in the way I think proper.

43. The father's two alternatives are now stated; either marriage to Demetrius, or death.

44. **Law**—The same as ancient privilege, *i.e.*, custom or acknowledged right or practice.

45. **Immediately**—Expressly, directly.

In that case—*i.e.*, in the event of her refusal to consent.

46. **Be advised**—Be deliberate, think duly. Advise is from the Old French *aviser*, to be of opinion. Besides the ordinary meaning, advise sometimes means inform; and the adv. 'advisedly' still retains the meaning, deliberately.

47. **As a God**—The worship of ancestors is a large element in ancient religions. The Latin *pietas* expressed duty to the gods, to one's country and to parents. So in the Decalogue, one of the commandments enjoins the honouring of parents. Theseus is of course speaking as a very ancient Greek.

48. **Composed your beauties**—Formed you, gave you being, put your parts together and made you beautiful as you are. To 'compose' is to form a unity out of various parts placed together.

49. **But as a form**—Only as a waxen (lifeless) figure. She is not entitled to separate exercise of mind or will or desire.

50. **By him imprinted**—Having received from him all that gives you definite character and makes you what you are. The conception of a form of wax again suggests the seal. Her father has, as it were, imprinted in the wax the human shape and likeness.

And within his—And (one who has it) within (or in) his power.

51. **To leave the figure**—To maintain or preserve the form (*i.e.*, of a woman or maiden). Warburton suggested *'leve*, = *releve*, *i.e.*, bring into relief, show to advantage, improve the position of.

Disfigure it—Destroy it, *i.e.*, by death. The terms figure and disfigure refer primarily to the wax. 'Disfigure' is to put out of shape, as by melting the wax.

52. **Worthy gentleman**—Therefore suitable as a husband.

54. **In this kind**—In reference to the present matter of your marriage. This and similar phrases, where 'kind' means respect, or manner, are frequent in Shakespeare. See *As You Like It*, II. i. 27; *Much Ado*, II. i. 70.

Wanting.....**voice**—Inasmuch as he is without your father's approbation. To give one's voice is to give one's vote or judgment. [Here the meaning is stronger as the

father's voice in the matter is supposed to be fully authoritative.

55. **The worthier**—Not necessarily as a man, but as a suitor. Theseus adheres to his epithet.

56. **I would**—I do wish. Would is the past tense of will, but its meaning is often, as here, present, with a peculiar modification or intensity.

But ... eyes—So as to see as I see. But = only.

57. **Must**—Stronger than ought, as submission is not only a duty, but a practical necessity.

With his judgment—Her eyes must be merely instrumental, enabling her to appreciate the husband chosen for her by her father, not organs by which she is able to choose for herself.

58. **Do**—Expletive merely, and not emphatic as in modern English. So *passim*.

59. Hermia feels an unusual and unexpected confidence; due either to her own determination or to something comforting in the manner of Theseus.

60. **Modesty**—Probably, my character or reputation as a young lady.

61. **In... ...presence**—Before such an august magistrate. Presence is thus used chiefly of the presence of a sovereign.

61. **Plead my thoughts**—Put forth and submit for approval my thoughts (including plans, desires) as an advocate submits arguments to a judge.

65. **Die the death**—A strong phrase used of a death (or execution) legally inflicted. It occurs in the New Testament, *Matthew* XV. 4: 'Whosoever curseth father or mother let him die the death'; and in Shakespeare, *Ant. and Cleop.*, IV. xiv. 26; *Measure for Measure*, II. iv. 165. Similar phrases consisting of intransitive verbs and cognate accusatives were not uncommon in older English. The article 'the' denotes the well-known or terrible death.

Or to abjure—Theseus here, more merciful than her father, allows a third alternative—the life of a religious devotee spent in perpetual virginity. 'Abjure' is to take an oath of abnegation.

Society—Includes not only companionship, but acquaintance, all social relationships.

67. **Question your desires**—Examine yourself in respect of the desires or longings of your nature.

68. **Know of**—Find out from, ascertain from your present youthful temperament.

Blood—Whether you are hot-blooded or cold-blooded; how far you are able to control impulses and passions.

69. **Whether**—Dependent on the verbs question, know, examine. After examine we should supply 'so as to be sure.' Here and generally in Shakespeare 'whether' is a monosyllable.

70. **Endure the livery**—Continue to tolerate the life of a nun. 'Livery' strictly means dress, especially the dress of the servants of a large establishment, which is of a particular kind or pattern and has been *delivered* or handed over to them by their employers. In the text the word livery (denoting the special robes or dress of a nun) is used by metonymy for the life which the dress symbolises.

Nun—Strictly this is a Christian word, but is used here of a virgin consecrated to Diana. The word came into Anglo-Saxon from the Low Lat. *nunna*, a nun or mother. It is used in North's *Plutarch* of virgins of a Greek temple. Such unhistoric use is what is called an Anachronism.

71. A further description of the same thing.

In shady cloister mewed—Shut up so as to be excluded from all the gaiety and brightness of the world. Shady or shaded means in the shade, dark: cloister, lit. enclosure, is the room or grounds within which the devotee is kept. 'Mewed' is caged. The term is derived ultimately from Lat. *mutare*, to change, and referred primarily to moulting or changing of feathers. Hence a mew was a cage in which hawks were kept while moulting. In London, from a change in the use of the buildings, the *mews* (originally for hawks) came to be the royal stables. The usual meaning of the verb is to moult, as in BACON, *Essays* XXIX. Milton in his *Areopagitica* uses it in the sense of, renew by moulting.

72. **Barren sister**—Theseus is presenting the religious life in as unattractive a form as possible in the hope of inducing Hermia to consent to marry Demetrius. 'Sister' is another Christian term, being used technically of nuns in various designations; such as 'Sisters of Mercy.'

73. **Chanting**.....This line is descriptive of the worshippers of Diana and tells the mode of life in Hermia's prospect.

Faint—This is a difficult word. The meaning of the passage is that the life is joyless. The divinity is cold and unsympathising. There is nothing to awaken delight or arouse fervour or enthusiasm. Hence the hymns also will be cold, passionless, formal; they will be hymns in form and manner but entirely without enthusiasm or rejoicing. The faintness therefore may apply to thought and feeling, and also to the sound. Faint is the opposite of hearty; and perhaps the poet means to suggest the difficulty of keeping up so dull a

life, the tendency to faint or fail in the performance of this worship.

Cold—The light of the moon is pale and night is cold in comparison with the sun and day. Cf. II. i. 156.

Fruitless—Withholding fruit; favouring barrenness (line 72). The reference is to Diana as a celibate goddess. See on line 89.

74. **Thrice blessed they**—This inversion with the ellipsis (or omission of 'are') is much more emphatic than the ordinary construction. Such abbreviations and inversions were characteristic of the oldest English poetry. The manner is often happily imitated in the poetry of Walter Scott. It usually marks a change in the thought or argument.

Thrice is a word of intensity, practically the same as very.

Master—Control with ease; have obtained full power over.

So—So .....as to undergo.

75. Grammatically 'as' is understood at the beginning of this line.

Maiden, adj. See II. i. 164.

Pilgrimage—Life conceived as a journey through trials and disappointments to a better land is often called a pilgrimage. The metaphor is found in the Old Testament. *Genesis*, XLVII. 9. Cf. *Hebrews*, XI. 13.

The sentiment of these two lines may have been introduced to compliment or to propitiate Queen Elizabeth who was probably on some occasion one of the audience.

76. **Earthlier-happy**—The meaning is, from an earthly point of view happier. It is possible that the comparative form is by a misprint put with the wrong word. The mistake would have been easy if there was no *y* (but in both cases, *i.e.*,) in the original MS. Both the quartos have however 'happy.' It is best that the phrase be accepted as one of Shakespeare's daring liberties with language. The two adjectives form a compound which takes the comparative termination after the most emphatic half.

Rose distilled—The rose plucked and its substance converted into fragrant liquid. Twice this idea is repeated in the Sonnets. In Sonnet 5 he says that flowers distilled—

Lose but their show, their substance still lives sweet.

77. **That**—The rose.

Withering.....Unplucked and allowed to wither on the bush.

Virgin thorn—At this point Shakespeare passes from describing the rose to describing the unmarried life. The sentence and its metaphors are therefore somewhat mixed.

The virgin thorn belongs to the rose; thorny virginity to the maiden. The first phrase is in reality meaningless and is useful only as suggesting the second, *i.e.*, as suggesting the hardships of celibacy. The thorn belongs, of course, not to a shrub or tree, but to the rose bush. Only in Paradise was found "without thorn the rose" (*Paradise Lost*, IV. 256).

78. **Grows.....dies**—Meant to include the whole of life.

Single blessedness—This happy expression recalls the epithet, blessed, of line 74, but in such a way as to throw a sarcastic doubt on the actuality of the bliss. The phrase has become familiar as a description of unmarried life, but it owes its point to its veiled irony. 'Single blessedness' is an abbreviation of 'the blessedness of a single life.'

79. **So**—As you have described, lines 71—75.

Virgin patent—The patent or right by which she is and can remain a virgin. Virginity is a possession with regard to the maintenance of which she conceives that she has exclusive right of determination. She thus denies the right of her father to give her in marriage, and asserts the rights of woman. For this 'patent' she had royal example, if not royal 'letters patent.'

Up—Another instance of an unnecessary adverb intended to complete the idea of the verb or to fill up the line.

81. **Unto his lordship**—Unto him as my lord; *i.e.*, as my husband with full rights over me. The term lord is still sometimes used for husband.

Unwished—A trisyllable. The meaning probably is, hated.

Yoke—Symbol of authority. Dative case after 'give.'

82. **My soul**—I in my innermost being. The phrase is frequent in Scripture, especially in the *Psalms*, as my soul longeth, thirsteth, waiteth, &c. &c.

Sovereignty—Supreme authority. Sovereign and supreme are from the same root and virtually equivalent.

The preposition 'to' or 'unto' is understood either before 'whose' or after 'sovereignty.'

83. **Pause**—Apparently equivalent to think or reflect. Cf. the use of the substantive in Hamlet's soliloquy. (Gr. *pausis*, a ceasing.)

By—On or before.

The next—The day of the next; elsewhere defined as 1st May.

84. **Sealing-day.....For everlasting bond**—The day when we will be united in the indissoluble bonds of matrimony. Sealing is here used of the completion of a covenant.

Love—This use of the abstract noun for the person who is

the object of the affection is an example of the figure of metonymy. Frequent in this play.

85. **Fellowship**—Companionship or partnership in life. 'Fellow' is from the Scandinavian, and originally meant partnership in property.

86. **Upon that day**—After a parenthesis of two lines the poet repeats with emphasis the date already stated.

Either—Here introducing three alternatives.

87. **For**—On account of.

88. **As he would**—As he (your father) wills.

89. **Or. ... altar**—The reference is to the form and manner in which the vow of celibacy was publicly and solemnly made. Diana, daughter of Jupiter and Latona, twin-sister of Apollo, goddess of hunting (and in the upper world identified with the Moon) lived in celibacy and was a patroness of chastity. See Milton's *Comus*, 441—445.

90. **For aye**—For her whole life.

Austerity—A life of rigid self-denial in which all gaiety or pleasure is abandoned. From a Greek verb meaning to parch.

Single—As opposed to conjugal.

91. **Relent**—Be not obstinate, or unbending. The root meaning is slacken. (Lat. *re, ad, lentus.*)

Yield .. to—Surrender.. .. in acknowledgment of.

92. **Crazed title**—The phrase is used in antithesis to 'certain right.' Demetrius has a right sure and certain in the choice of Egeus now sanctioned by Theseus. Lysander has a title or claim in the lady's preference; but as this has no legal validity and has not been acknowledged by Theseus, it is described as 'crazed' or invalid. 'Crazed' is a form from the Scandinavian, akin in origin and formerly similar in meaning to 'cracked.' Cracked was a stronger word, used of greater damage.

94. **Let me have**.. ...Do not come between me and.. ..

Do you marry him—Lysander here satirises the law or custom by which a parent claims the right to dispose of a daughter's affections. The words are spoken in scorn or ridicule.

95. **Scornful Lysander**—Tones of voice would convey reproach for such ridicule.

True, he hath.....Truly he is loved by me. Or, it is true that.....

96. **What is mine**—What of mine I choose to give him.

97. **She is mine**—*i. e.*, my property.

Right of her—Legal rights regarding her.

98. **Estate**—Settle as property upon, give as an estate to.

Unto—Elsewhere Shakespeare uses *on* or *upon* which is supposed to be more in accordance with legal phraseology.

99, 110. Lysander pleads his cause and gives a special reason why the judgment of Egeus should not be carried out.

99. **As well derived**—Of as good birth, or of as high rank. 'Derive' is from the Lat. *rivus*, a stream, and was originally used of water drained off.

100. **As well possessed**—As rich in money or possessions. Formerly possessed was used as an adj., as in the phrase possessed of goods.

101. **My fortunes**—My position in the world including rank, wealth, office, everything external as distinguished from internal, *i.e.*, mental, endowments.

Every way.....In every respect reckoned as good, or ranked as high...as those of Demetrius.

102. **If not with vantage**—If not better, if not with the advantage or superiority on my side. Vantage is the same as advantage, both being wrong forms of the Mid. Eng. *avantage*.

103. **Which**—Here used practically as a compound relative, = what, or a thing which. The clause it introduces is parenthetical.

Boasts—Things to be proud of or to boast of. Here referring to rank, wealth, fortune.

104. **I am beloved**.....This Lysander affirms to be the supreme ground on which a lady can be given in marriage. Her affection is a sacred thing against which nothing is to be weighed. **Beloved of**=loved by. 'Of' follows verbal adjectives.

Beauteous—More poetic than the hackneyed beautiful, and also more correct as beauty is the Fr. *beaute*, (Lat. *bellitas*), and *-ous* is a Romanic, while *-ful* is an Old Eng. suffix; also sometimes more suitable for verse since it can be used as a dissyllable.

105. **Prosecute**—Follow up, seek to make good.

106. **Avouch**... ..**head**—Testify or emphatically affirm it in his presence. 'To his face' is the more familiar expression. Avouch is formed from vouch by adding the prefix *a* corresponding to Fr. *a* or Lat. *ad*. The O.F. *voucher* is from Lat. *vocare*, to call.

107. **Made love**—Courted, paid addresses to.

Nedar's—The name appears again in IV. i. 129. Its origin is unknown.

108. **Her soul**—Her heart, or her affections.

Dotes—Used of foolish or childish attachment.

109. Here a climax is intended. Note also the alliterative effects.

In idolatry—As one superstitiously worships idols. Helena regards Demetrius as a sort of divinity and almost worships him. There is nothing here contemptuous in the use of the term idolatry. Lysander, as a Greek, uses the term in its etymological meaning.

110. **Spotted and inconstant**—The inconstancy consists in changing from Helena to Hermia. This inconstancy is regarded as chequering his character so that he is called spotted. Spotted and inconstant have thus probably the same meaning, though the idea in the one case refers to space, in the other to time. The opposites, unspotted, constant, are high moral epithets.

111. **So much**—Or simply, so; what you have mentioned.

112. **With Demetrius thought**.....Intended or purposed to have spoken to Demetrius on the matter. Note that 'to have' is one syllable, = t' 've. Spoke, as frequently for spoken.

113. **Over-full of self-affairs**—Unduly busy with private affairs. Self-affairs are private matters concerning oneself.

114. **My mind did lose it**—It slipt from my mind. I forgot about it.

116. **Private schooling**—See lines 124—26. The reference is not explicit.

117. **For you**—As for you.

Look you arm—See that you prepare or fortify yourself.

118. **Fit your fancies**—Adapt your love ideas or affections. Note the alliterations.

119. **Or else**—Or if you do not.

120. This line must be regarded as parenthetical. Otherwise it should have preceded the verb.

Extenuate—Relax, not put in full force; lit. make thin.

122. **What cheer**?—In what spirits are you? Are you wearied or amused or what? 'Cheer' is from O.F. *chere*, Low Lat. *cara*, the face: and is used first of the expression of the countenance and then of the feelings thus exhibited. To be 'of good cheer' is to be hopeful, courageous.

123. **Go**—Theseus is to walk with Hippolyta; the other will doubtless follow. In this line, and in lines 106, 112, 11[illegible] *Demetrius* is a trisyllable. At the end of a line or sentence it is four-syllabled.

124. **Business**—A trisyllable. The usual older substantive from busy was *bisihede*, also *bisischipe* (i.e., busy-ship), but *bisignisse* is also found. To it seems to have become attached the meaning of the French word *busoignes* which was used of business carried on in the English law courts.

125. **Against our**—With a view to our, so as to be ready for; a nearly obsolete use of the preposition.

Nuptial—Nuptials, wedding ceremonies. The singular form is used now only as an adj. as in line 1. In Shakespeare we find both singular and plural forms of both the nouns nuptials and funeral.

126. **Nearly that concerns**—That intimately concerns.

127. **Duty and desire**—They profess not only loyal obedience but eager desire to serve their prince. They are dutiful, but it is also their delight to obey or serve or attend. The same use of 'duty' is in V. i. 83, 91, 101.

According to a stage direction in the folios, while the others go out Lysander and Hermia remain. The latter part is wanting in the quartos, and the First Folio must be regarded as a correction thereof. At this point, however, Pope, followed by Warburton, proposed to begin a new scene; without any warrant except his own judgment for altering the folio stage direction. Fleay also begins a new scene here. It does seem strange that the two lovers, whose love is forbidden, should be left alone. But Egeus and Demetrius, who only would care to object, have to follow the commands of Theseus; and he is perhaps too engrossed with his own preparations to observe the injudiciousness of the situation. Again, it is thought that the King's palace was not the most natural place for a confidential conversation of lovers and the making of a secret arrangement. These criticisms amount to saying that the plot is not skilfully constructed and that the parts do not develop naturally out of one another. Shakespeare may have thought that the difficulties of his arrangement were counterbalanced by its convenience. A private interview of the two lovers for the arrangement of the device on which the play hangs was necessary, and was obtained at the proper time by the departure of the others with their sovereign. Lysander did not belong to the King's retinue, and Hermia (though the daughter of Egeus) was not wanted in their councils; it was therefore necessary to dispose of these two apart from those that followed Theseus to his more private room. Unless it was the supposed practice to allow a large measure of freedom to Hermia and Lysander the situation of their being lovers (as above described, lines 28—34) could not have arisen.

It is also to be remembered that the division of plays into Acts and Scenes was not so carefully attended to in the beginning of Shakespeare's career as it was a few years later. Thus we may imagine an interval after line 127, though the lovers are still in the palace courts and no change of scene is marked.

128. **How now**—How (art thou) now? How (is it with thee) now?

129. **How chance**—How (does it) chance (that); cf. V. i. 300; a conversational elliptic idiom.

Roses—The red or healthful colour on her cheeks. Metaphor. So the brow is sometimes compared to a (white) lily. As in Keats' *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*—

> I see a lily on thy brow,
> With anguish moist and fever-dew;
> And on thy cheeks a fading rose
> Fast withereth too.

Fade so fast—A little ago when Hermia spoke to Theseus she felt bold, and the colour of her face may be supposed to have been heightened. Now she has become suddenly pale, partly from reaction, partly as a consequence of Theseus' last words; lines 117—121. The reference to a sudden change of expression seems to show that a new scene is not intended.

130. In the conversation that follows Hermia makes an effort to be gay and cheerful and witty.

Belike—Likely, probably. A compound of by like.

Want of rain—A play on the Metaphor of the Roses.

131. **Beteem**—Allow, or grant in abundance. There seems to have been an old verb 'beteem,' from *teem*, to think fit, found in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, II. 8, 19; in Golding's *Ovid*, 1587, also in *Hamlet*, I. 2. 141, in each case meaning to allow. There is a conversational word *teem* meaning as an adj. empty and as a verb to pour out (the adj. is also written toom). It seems probable that Shakespeare in using the unfamiliar word beteem had the familiar idea of teeming or pouring out in his mind. Thus the two meanings may be combined. [Authorities are divided on the word. Skeat assumes that the meaning is allow.]

Tempest of my eyes—A bold metaphor indicating that she is agitated and is prepared to weep profusely.

These two lines form what is called a 'conceit': that is, they illustrate the tendency to far-fetched similes, illustrations or ideas which characterised much of the literature of the latter half of the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries. Such was the conception of 'wit' prevalent in England and still more in Italy. There is much of it in the early plays of Shakespeare. Less interesting styles were developed later by Donne and his school. See Johnson's Essay on Cowley where he criticises what he calls the Metaphysical poets (now called Marinists, after the Italian poet

Marino). In the age of Anne, men were taught by Addison that wit was what is "natural without being obvious," or as it was put by Pope—

> True wit is nature to advantage dressed
> What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed.

What we find in the poems and early plays of Shakespeare is the uncontrolled effusion of a bright and sparkling fancy. Later he outgrew the *concetti* which belonged to the false art of his age.

132. **Ay me!**—Alas for me! This strong ejaculation is French. Old French *ay mi* not connected with English 'ay.' The phrase occurs twice in Milton's *Lycidas*, lines 56, 154.

For aught.—For anything; *i.e.*, as far as. Aught=a whit, *i.e.*, one whit. The spelling in the folios is 'ought' which is the normal development of the form.

Ever I could.—As in the folio; the reading of both quartos being "I could ever."

133. **Tale or history.**—Two forms of composition. The former referring more to romances (such as were familiar from the thirteenth century onwards), the latter to actual historical records; the former to fiction, the latter to truth. 'Tale' is here most naturally connected with 'hear,' and 'history' with 'read.'

134. **The course.**—This is one of the most familiar of all Shakespeare's lines, and it is the key to much of this play. The metaphor seems taken from a river which has to find its way in uneven ground through rocks, woods, hills, and down declivities. The application is to courtship preceding marriage.

True love.—A familiar expression, both concrete and abstract, in old ballad literature. True is genuine.

135. Lysander proceeds to specify obstacles; each of which calls forth from Hermia a strong expression of feminine feeling.

It was different—It was a case of difference. The adjective can, in sense, agree only with the persons.

In blood—*i.e.*, in birth, rank; not race or nationality, as the context proves. This symbolic use of the word is the figure of metonymy.

136. **O cross!**—Hermia's opening ejaculations. Cross! spite! hell! are meant to be in keeping with the sentiment or idea of the line and they show a successive rise of feeling. Cross suggests something perverse, contrary to nature.

Too—Is probably intended to indicate keen personal feeling.

Enthralled.—The union of one of high rank with one of humble position is in Hermia's judgment, thraldom or slavery for the former. Probably she means so whether the party is conscious of the thraldom or not. 'Enthralled' and 'misgraffed' both point to actual but unsuitable marriage.

Low.—Theobald's correction for *love* of the early editions. It seems required by the sense and the antithesis.

137. **Misgraffed.**—Unsuitably grafted. Marriage is conceived as the engrafting of one tree on another, as the vine on the elm. But the age of the trees or the plants should correspond. 'Graft' is a corruption of 'graff' which comes ultimately from Gr. *graphein*, to write. This prefix mis- means 'wrongly'; akin to the verb 'miss,' to fail, or not to hit.

138. **O spite!**—There is something to awaken despite or contempt in the marriage of a girl with, or her fascination for, an old man. It seems probable, however, that Hermia intends her first adjectives—high, old—to be applied to the woman, and that this sentiment is really traceable to the poet's own experience. Cf. the verses attributed to Shakespeare—

> Crabbed age and youth
> Cannot live together, &c.

Engaged—This term ordinarily means 'betrothed,' but here it seems to mean wedded. The primary meaning is pledged, whence the more general idea of bound. Through French from Low Lat. *vadium*; Lat. *vas*.

139. **Stood.**—Rested, was based, made to depend.

Choice of friends—This as the next line shows is undoubtedly the original meaning or an approximation to it, but the reading of the folios is not 'friends' but 'merit.' 'Merit' is there inserted as a correction of 'friends' which was the word in the text of the quartos from the second of which the folio was printed, It may therefore be assumed that the original reading was 'friends' and that to this Hermia replies in the next line; but that later Shakespeare altered the text to 'merit' which is a subtler and better idea. Possibly he felt a doubt whether a love resting on the choice of friends could be called 'true love.'

'Choice of merit' is a choice based not on love or arbitrary affection, but on other unemotional qualities—such as talent, scholarship, fame, valour, wealth, worth. Demetrius was a *worthy* gentleman (l. 52).

Note that the phrase implies its negative converse: disregard of personal choice or inward affinities.

The supposition that 'merit' is a later emendation by

Shakespeare himself illustrates an important metrical change in his style. The word merit makes what is called a double ending, or adds an eleventh syllable to the line. Double endings are frequent in Shakespeare's mature style, but are rare in his earlier dramas. In this respect the dramatist has greater freedom than the poet. Shakespeare began as a poet and gradually acquired mastery and exercised freedom as a dramatist.

140. **O hell!**—The strength of this exclamation, as well as the following words, shows that Hermia considers this third case applicable to herself.

Sympathy—Harmony, correspondence: mutual fitness or adaptation. Sympathy in choice may be opposed to the choice of friends where the feelings of the young couple are not consulted; or to the choice of merit which is independent of love and may be judged by some one else; or most probably it is opposed to all of the three cases specified above. Elsewhere in Shakespeare, as in *Othello*, II. i. 242, sympathy is used in the sense of 'correspondence' such as is violated in the suppositions of lines 136—138. The root meaning is fellow-feeling.

143. As there are three kinds of wrong alliances, so a right suitable alliance is liable to three kinds of frustration or separation. The words war, death, sickness all seem by the following lines to imply permanent separation, that is, death. The word death must therefore stand for a particular kind of death, probably accidental or violent death.

Did lay siege—The past tense is used because Lysander is giving the results of his reading. Lay siege (or besiege) is a military metaphor. Wedded happiness is conceived as a quiet castle suddenly besieged and destroyed by a ruthless enemy. 'It' must refer to 'sympathy.'

144. **Momentary**—Momentary is the reading of the folios, momentany of the earlier quartos. In older English 'momentany' was, perhaps, the more frequent form, having come in from the Fr. *momentaine*; Lat. *momentaneus*.

As a sound—A sound passing through the air and in a moment gone is a fitting image of very brief existence.

144. **Swift as a shadow**—A shadow being an unsubstantial thing has no permanence. Shadows as they depend on positions are perpetually changing. The shadows cast by objects change with the sun; and still more rapidly if the objects themselves are moving. The simile occurs in the Old Testament; *1 Chron.* XXIX. 15; *Job* VIII. 9.

Short as any dream—Again, the simile is drawn from an unsubstantial, unreal thing. Cf. *Job* XX. 8; *Ps.* LXXIII. 19, 20; also the famous lines in *The Tempest*—

We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

145. **Brief as the lightning**—This resembles the first simile ('as a sound'), but is more hyperbolical—lightning being the swiftest thing known. Formed from the verb 'lighten'—the older form of the infinitive thereof having been *lightnen*.

Collied—Dark. A stormy night is imagined in which the moon and stars are clouded. 'Collied' is from 'coal' and means marked with coal, darkened, blackened.

146. **In a spleen**—In a sudden fit or blaze. The spleen (Gr. *splen*) is a bodily organ to the action of which was attributed the splenetic or passionate and ill-humoured temperament. In *Venus and Adonis*, 152—"A thousand spleens bear her a thousand ways."

Unfolds—Opens to view, removes the covering of darkness and makes visible both earth and sky.

147. **And ere** .....*i.e.*, in an instant; before a word can be spoken regarding it. Cf. *Romeo and Juliet*, II. ii. 119.

148. **The jaws**..... The night is again pitch dark; the lightning has vanished. Darkness is personified and represented as swallowing the light. Cf. the Indian mythological explanation of an eclipse of the sun.

With these four similes which in their hyperbolical character are characteristically Shakespearian, compare the similar description of the evanescence of happiness in Burns' *Tam o' Shanter*:—

But pleasures are like poppies spread;
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed:
Or like the snowflake in the river;
A moment white, then melts for ever!
Or like the Borealis race,
That flit ere you can point the place:
Or like the rainbow's lovely form
Evanishing amid the storm.

149. **So quick**—So quickly; probably referring to the four instances and not merely to the last.

Bright things—Inclusive of love.

Confusion—Wreck and ruin. The word has four syllables.

With the whole of the above speech on the uncertainty of love compare the passage in MILTON, *Paradise Lost*, X. 896—904, where however the poet draws more from his own and general experience than from Shakespeare—

He never shall find out fit mate, but such

As some misfortune brings him, or mistake.
Or whom he wishes most shall seldom gain
Through her perverseness, but shall see her gained
By a far worse; or if she love, withheld
By parents; or his happiest choice too late
Shall meet, already linked and wedlock-bound
To a fell adversary, his hate or shame.

150. **Ever crossed**—Always thwarted, *i.e.*, by some obstacle across their path or some inherent difficulty.

151. **It stands**.....It is a thing unalterable, having been decreed by the higher powers. '**Edict**' is accented on the second syllable (Lat. *edictum*, a proclamation). The use of the word '**destiny**' though from the Latin is in accordance with Greek ideas which represented human life as determined by fate, or the fates, or necessity.

152. **Teach**.....**patience**—Teach has here two objects (as in Latin *doceo*). 'Trial' may be conceived either as in the Acc. or in the Dat. The meaning is teach ourselves patience in our trial. Hermia is inculcating the lesson of resignation to the Divine will, not to her father's. Patience in older English means not meekness, but endurance, power of sustaining hardship.

153. **Customary cross**—A universal and unavoidable hardship. This use of the word 'cross' is due to the precept of Jesus: whosoever "will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me," *Mat.* XVI. 24.

154. **Due to**—Inseparable from.

Thoughts—Anxious thoughts, fears, imaginings of trouble.

Dreams—The context suggests unpleasant dreams, fearful anticipations.

Sighs—An evidence of love-sickness, or of fears and distresses in love.

155. **Poor Fancy's followers**—Fancy here means simply love. It is personified and addressed familiarly as 'poor' on account of its trials and sufferings. These are indicated by the five kinds of followers enumerated as constituting its train.

156. **A good persuasion**—A good faith to live by; or a good argument (as in *Gal.* V. 8). The word might be used either actively or passively. It is used passively as we use 'conviction' in *Cymbeline*, I. iv. 125, and in *Measure for Measure*, IV. i. 47.

157. **Widow**—Adj. = widowed.

Dowager—One possessed of a *dowage* or endowment; on whom an annuity or property has been settled. See on line 5.

158. **Revenue**—Here accented on the second syllable, as it sometimes is still. The earlier spelling in Shakespeare is *revennew*. Cf. line 6.

She .....**child**—This statement is made to explain line 160, and also to encourage Hermia with Lysander's expectations of inheritance.

159. **Respects**—Looks to (affectionately). Lines 159 and 160 are transposed in the early editions, manifestly by mistake. The former was probably a marginal addition.

160. **Remote**—The reading of the quartos. Used as we use 'distant' whether the distance be great or small. The reading of the folios is 'removed.'

Seven—Practically a monosyllable here.

Leagues—A league is three miles. The word is, through Old Fr., and folk-Latin, ultimately from the Celtic.

161. **Gentle**—An epithet of compliment as in the word gentleman.

May I—I can without hindrance.

162. **Sharp**—Severe, uncompromising.

163. **Cannot** .. ..The law has no force outside the city limits.

164. **Steal forth thy**—Come out quietly and secretly from thy.

165. **Without**—Outside. With league, cf. mile, Sc. 2. 92.

167. **To do observance**—To celebrate the morning of May-day; an annual festivity. This was an English, not a Greek observance. But Shakespeare does not concern himself with these proprieties of time or place. He thinks only of his London audience. See IV. i. 130.

To a morn of May—Not any morn of May, but the morning of the first of May in a year not specified; what Milton calls in his short poem thereon "May morning." The folios have 'for'; the quartos 'to.'

168. This is the first line with a double ending unless in 139 we read 'merit.' Double endings are frequent in Shakespeare's later style.

169. **I swear**... ..Hermia 'jumps' at the proposal.

Cupid's strongest bow—Cupid is the Latin god of Love, a son of Venus, represented as a boy shooting with bow and arrow. According to one of Ben Jonson's Masques: He doth bear a golden bow, And a quiver hanging low, Full of arrows that outbrave Dian's shafts.

170. **Best arrow**—There were two arrows, one with golden point, one with leaden. The former produced, the latter prevented, love. Thus Cupid by discharging arrows could produce either effect.

171. **Simplicity**—The opposite of duplicity; innocence, truth. Cf. 'harmless as doves,' *Mat.* X. 16.

Venus' doves—Venus (Gr. Aphrodite) was the goddess of Love. Her chariot was supposed to be drawn by birds, especially by doves.

172. **By that which**..... An allusion (as some editors suppose) to the girdle of Venus which, by whomsoever worn, threw the beholder into passionate love.

173. **That fire**—The funeral pyre on which Dido, Queen of Carthage, ended her life.

174. **False Troyan**—Æneas, who is supposed to have proved false to Dido because he left her in quest of Italy. The *Æneid* (or story of Æneas) is the great epic poem of Rome. Virgil tells how Æneas, after the fall of Troy, sailed westward to found a new kingdom (the Roman republic or empire) in Latium, and how on the way he was shipwrecked and cast on the Carthaginian shore. There Dido received him and passionately loved him. He abandoned her; whereupon she mounted a pyre and stabbed herself with a sword he had left behind.

The modern spelling is Trojan (not Troyan); from the Lat. *Troia*.

Under sail—Put out to sea. Virgil tells how at dawn she saw 'the fleet move on with levelled sails.'

175. **By all the**..... By the innumerable. Hermia here hints the sentiment in the line: "Men were deceivers ever."

176. Women make vows freely, but the number broken by men is greater even than the number spoken by women.

177. **In that same**—In that very place (which) thou hast appointed (for) me. In the above speech Hermia offers a succession of vows or protestations in the strongest language possible. She begins more or less playfully, but rises in a climax of moral ideas, until she expresses, by the reference to the fire, faithfulness unto death. The solemnity of her utterance is then relieved by the touch of humour or banter, with which she places in contrast with her own strong vows the countless vows broken by the other sex. It is in keeping also with the poetic character of the passage that from line 171 Shakespeare passes into rhyming. The last two lines of a scene are often rhymed, but in this play either from its poetic character or because it belongs to Shakespeare's youth rhyme is very largely used.

180. **God speed**—Good-morning, a salutation of well-wishing. Pope wished to begin a third scene here.

Whither away?—To what place are you going? Fleay

thinks these words indicate that Helena passes them on a street. There was nothing to indicate that Lysander and Hermia had left the Palace of Theseus where the scene is enacted, but the room may have been of a semi-public kind, or the lovers may be standing on a verandah near which Helena was walking. An ancient Greek, like an Oriental palace would have contained open court-yards and arrangements of various kinds. Here 'whither' is a dissyllable.

181. **That.....unsay**—Withdraw that application of the word 'fair.'

182. **Your fair**—Your beauty. Fair was sometimes used as a substantive, both concrete and abstract. The second use in this line may be either concrete or abstract; the meaning may be either, O happy beauty that can attract, or, O happy fair one.

It is to be noted, however, that instead of 'your fair' which is the reading of the quartos, the folios have 'you fair' which is either a misprint or a correction. In the latter case 'fair' is either a adj. or a adverb. Thus the abstract noun fair may not be in the passage at all.

183. **Lode-stars**—Or leading stars, the stars that guide. Originally applied to the pole-star which guided mariners. Here used in the sense of drawing after or charming. The original meaning of 'lode' was way or course. 'Load' is the same word though it has now the secondary meaning of burden, due to confusion of lead and lade.

Tongue's sweet air—The sweet music of your voice (when singing). 'Air' is tune or melody.

184. **Tuneable**—Musical, melodious. So IV. i. 121.

Than lark.....The shepherd has to be out in the early morning and can appreciate in the fields the lark's shrill song. English poetry is full of references to the lark. See the Odes of Shelley, Hogg, Wordsworth. O.E. *lawerce*.

185. **When wheat is green**—In the spring time or in early summer. Wheat is sown in the beginning of winter and is under-ground till spring.

Hawthorn buds—The buds or first flowering of the hawthorn or May tree. The word 'haw' meant originally 'hedge,' later it was used also of the berry of the hawthorn tree which was largely made use for purposes of enclosure. Cf. *L'Allegro*, 67-68—

> 'And every shepherd tells his tale,
> Under the hawthorn in the dale';

where also the lark is referred to.

186. **Catching**—Infectious.

Were favour so—If favour were so. Favour is health, beauty, handsomeness, charm; as is preserved in the epithets well-favoured, ill-favoured. It is here in contrast with sickness.

187. **Yours would I catch**—Your charming qualities would I transfer to myself (as sickness may be got by infection or contagion).

The text, which is good sense, is Hanmer's correction of 'Your words I' of the early quarto editions or 'I'd' of the folios. If the quartos and folios be followed, it is necessary to make the line parenthetical. But even then the sense is not very clear. It seems necessary to regard 'words' as an uncorrected misprint for 'would,' which was sometimes written 'wold' (so in line 201). The final *s* was transferred from 'yours' to 'word.'

188. **My..... voice**—The meaning seems to be; the charm of your voice would enter my soul by my ear, and thus I would become musical. Your endowment would pass to me.

There are no various readings of this line in the quartos or folios, yet many editors have regarded the text as corrupt chiefly because in what follows the words eye and tongue are repeated twice. Hence Lettsom emended, "my hair shall catch your hair" supposing that ear was wrongly taken down for hair and that on the second occasion 'voice' was substituted to make sense. Such emendation suggesting physical entanglement is grotesque. Scarcely less arbitrarily Deighton suggests "my fair.. your fair" which he thinks makes the passage parallel or similar to lines 182-183. This suggestion, however, is hardly in keeping with line 181 where Helena has repudiated 'fair' for herself and is in thought too general a conception. The chief difficulty seems to us to be in distinguishing the reference to the voice from the reference to the tongue. It is natural that Helena should wish to take in the charms of Hermia by the three channels—the ear, the eye, and the mouth. Her eyes would reflect or reproduce the love-light of Hermia's; her tongue would imitate the melodious utterance; and what she received by the ear would necessarily manifest itself by the voice. Probably the voice is mentioned as the organ of speech, and the tongue of song. It may be assumed that the text is right.

190. **Demetrius being bated**—Demetrius excepted. The form—bating Demetrius—is still used in semi-slang. Bate is the same as abate which is the correct form. Low Lat. *abbattere* to beat down; O. Fr. *abatre*.

191. **The rest**—*I.e.*, all the world except Demetrius.

To you translated—Changed into your form, condition, prospects. 'Translate' is used in the sense of transform as in III. i. 109, or of transference into another sphere and kind of existence. "Enoch was translated that he should not see death," *Hebrews*, XI. 3.

192. **How you look**—Your attractive manner.

Art—Skill, cunning device.

193. **You sway**.....You can exercise full power over and keep attracted to yourself. Cf. *As You Like It*, III. ii. 4. The metaphor may be taken from ideas of gravitation (or other explanation of the motions of the planets) which were in the air in the time of Shakespeare.

194. **I frown**—Hermia is not quite sincere here. But she knows that there is an art in frowning.

195. Helena in her simplicity acknowledges that she has tried to win him by smiles.

The figure of Antithesis runs through the lines 194—201.

The confining of speakers in dialogue to one line as in this passage was technically known by the Greeks as *stichomythia*.

197. **Prayers**—For his welfare; the opposite of curses.

Such affection—Similar love. The word 'affection' meant any mental state (including anger, desire, &c.).

Move—awaken, stir up.

198. **The**—An instrumental case of the def. article; meaning in that (or in which) degree. He follows me to that extent to which I hate him. His following is in direct proportion to my hating.

This and the next sentence illustrate parallel construction

200. **Folly**—Shown in his loving one that curses him and following one that hates him. The language is insincere, but is humorously spoken.

Instead of 'no fault' of the first quarto the folios and second quarto have simply 'none' (*i.e.*, no matter) of mine The sense is the same or nearly so. The next line as it contains with emphasis, both 'none' and 'fault' is an argument equally strong for either reading. It is in favour of the reading *none* that it retains Helena as a trisyllable. In the Collier MS. is a reading 'His fault fair Helena is none of mine' which if authenticated would solve the difficulties but it is probably an artificial change. On the whole the first quarto reading seems best.

201. **None**.....**beauty**—None (pertains to you) but your beauty; or, as an emendation, a semi-colon might be inserted after none.

Would that.....Still harping on the idea of being translated into the form and appearance of Hermia. Of course there is a play on the word 'fault.' Hermia's beauty has caused Helena's suffering. Abstractedly therefore it is guilty and also enviable.

202. At this point the argument changes. Hermia resolves to tell her old friend Helena of the flight or elopement just agreed on. So she bids Helena find comfort or hope in the fact that Demetrius will not be able to continue his suit of Hermia.

203. **Fly this**—Fly from this. The accusative construction corresponds with the Latin idiom.

204. **The time I did**—The time (when) I (first saw Lysander).

205. **Seemed**—The inversion is due to purely metrical considerations.

Paradise—A place of perfect bliss. Used of the garden or home in which Adam, the first man, was placed in his innocence: and also of the future home in Heaven. The Gr. *paradeisos* (from a old Persian word meaning an enclosure) was a park or pleasure garden.

206. **What** .....**love**—What transcendent excellences belong to Lysander my beloved one. That love here stands for the object of love is proved by the 'he' of next line. Johnson found in this passage a mysterious moral with which Hermia kindly comforted Helena.

207. **That**.....**turned**—As evinced by the fact that he hath been able to turn. That = inasmuch as.

Heaven.....**hell**.—Used metaphorically for place of bliss and place of misery. Cf. Milton's lines (*P. L.*, I. 253): The mind is its own place and in itself Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven; an idea already expressed in Marlowe's *Faustus*. The first quarto has the reading 'a hell.' Other editions omit this 'a.' Heaven is a monosyllable or dissyllable according as the 'a' is retained or not.

208. **Minds**—Intentions.

209. **When Phœbe**—Phœbe is the moon (as Phœbus is the sun). Shakespeare seems conveniently to forget that the moon to-morrow night will be within three days (at most of its end and visible only as a small crescent in the early morning. But see notes on lines 3, 9, 10.

210. **Her silver**.....The reflection of the moon in a lake is beautiful and has always been a favourite allusion of poets. Here the moon in the sky is conceived as a goddess who from above beholds her white face reflected in the waters.

Silver is here purely an epithet of colour (see l. 9); **visage** = countenance, face; **glass** = mirror, looking-glass.

211. **Decking**—Adorning. The primary meaning of deck is cover. It is a doublet of thatch.

Liquid pearl—Dewdrops on the grass are thus compared to liquid or dissolved pearls. In the sunlight they sparkle as diamonds, in the moonlight they have the more subdued appearance of pearls. See IV. v. 50.

Bladed grass—Ordinary grass has one blade or leaf; but some kinds have several blades. According to a Scotch song: Ilka (*i.e.*, each) blade o' grass has its ain drap o' dew.

212. **A time** .. ..A time that is always chosen for the concealment of lovers' flights. That is to say, eloping parties, in order to escape observation, leave late at night when others are asleep. **Still** = always, up till now, continually. The line is parenthetical.

213. **Through Athens' gates**—Out of the city, which was doubtless a walled town with gates.

Devised to steal—Planned to go secretly.

214. **You and I**—The two girls.

215. **Faint primrose-beds**—'Beds' simply means the ground on which in April and May primroses grow abundantly. 'Faint' probably refers to the colour—pale being an epithet of the primrose both in Shakespeare and Milton. The primrose is a very favourite flower though it has not the bright colour of the rose. The form primrose (first rose) is a corruption of Mid. Eng. *primerole*, Low Lat. *primula*, from *primus*, first; a name therefore simply descriptive of the early appearance of the flower.

216. **Emptying** .....Talking freely together and uttering all that was in our hearts.

Sweet—This which is doubtless the original reading was restored by Theobald from the *sweld* of the early editions. 'Sweet counsel' is a biblical phrase, *Ps.* LV. 14; and is thence derived. It is possible that the first compositor mis-read 'sweet' as 'sweld'; but it is also possible that on reflection Shakespeare resolved to break in this passage the monotony of rhyme, retaining 'companions' in line 219 and changing 'sweet' into a word of fuller and more appropriate meaning. 'Bosoms of their counsels swelled' are simply 'full hearts,' and the expression may be compared (to its advantage) with the 'stuffed bosom' in *Macbeth*. It corresponds with the verb 'emptying.'

218. **Turn away**.....Leave our native town for ever.

219. **Stranger companies**—This is Theobald's emendation

of 'strange companions.' It is made solely from the necessities of rhyme, the sense being good enough either way. The omission of a final *r* was a frequent error of printers. Perhaps it is better to say of a newly-married couple that they desire company (*i.e.*, society) than companions—they being sufficient for each other as companions. In either case the second phrase may be regarded as practically identical in meaning with the previous phrase 'new friends.' As an argument for the text of the early editions it may be noted that the word 'companion' occurs in the Prayer-book version which was in use in Shakespeare's time. The passage thus reads (*Psalm* LV, 14-15): "But it was even thou my companion; my guide and mine own familiar friend. We took sweet counsel together and walked in the house of God as friends." On the whole we think that the text of the early editions (with the four lines unrhymed) is Shakespeare's final form.

220. **Farewell sweet playfellow**—Implying that the past is over and that they will never be girls together again.

221. **Good luck grant**.... May good luck . . May you be so fortunate as to obtain your (loved) Demetrius. This is Hermia's prayer for Helena.

222. **Starve our sight** .....We must keep apart and not see one another (lest we should be suspected or watched) till the time appointed. Starve is used of causing death (or weakness) either by cold or hunger. The latter is the meaning here. Of course it is used metaphorically; the original meaning was simply die.

Our sight—Our eyes, or organs of sight.

223. **Lovers' food**—Looking or gazing on each other. See the quotation on line 32.

Morrow deep midnight—To-morrow late at night: 'Deep midnight' may mean when midnight has fully come; or it may be after midnight. The phrase suggests the darkness and stillness of the night; and at this time there would be no moon. Morrow is rarely used except in the phrase 'on the morrow.' Cf. IV. i. 85.

224. **My Hermia**—Or, my dear Hermia; a mode of affectionate address.

Adieu—Farewell: A compound word; Fr. *a, dieu* (Lat. *ad Deum*), (I commend you) unto God.

225. **As you**..... As you (dote) on him (so may) Demetrius.

226. **Othersome**—Some others, or simply, others. So *Acts*, XVII. 18.

227. **Through**—Throughout the whole city of. Amongst all the people.

228. **What of that?** What good comes from that seeing that Demetrius does not think so.

229. **He will not**.....He refuses to.

But he—'But' is thus regarded as a conj., not a prep.

230. **Errs**—*I.e.*, in judgment or appreciation of beauty.

230. **So I**—So I err. He depreciates me; I over-estimate him.

Admiring—Some editors assert that 'admiring' is here a verbal noun, thus accounting for the 'of.' But the verb 'admire' was often followed by of, as wonder is by 'at.' It is manifest that the construction of the line is parallel to that of the preceding; and therefore admiring and doting must be parsed in the same way. They are participles with conjunctive force; equal to, inasmuch as I err, inasmuch as I go on admiring of him.

Qualities—Characteristics good or bad.

232. **Base and vile**—Worthless. Opposed to 'form' of next line. Cf. *1 Cor.* I. 28.

Holding no quantity—Of no substance or importance; opposed to 'dignity.' Shakespeare could scarcely have known the scholastic or Aristotelian use of the term. He probably had in view the words of Paul, "things which are despised, yea and things which are not." Similarly in the *Taming of the Shrew*, IV. iii. 112, Shakespeare contemptuously couples 'quantity' with 'rag' and 'remnant.' Hallam gives 'value' as the meaning of quantity.

233. **Can transpose to**—Can make appear as.

Form—Style, beauty (not essence as in the strictly philosophic sense). Lat. *forma*, beauty.

Dignity—Worth, merit, importance, what commands esteem. Lat. *dignus*, worthy.

234. **Not with the eyes**—A reference to the arbitrariness of love, and the not seeing the faults of one beloved.

Mind—Some inner faculty, not however intellectual so much as emotional.

235. **Winged**.....**blind**—In modern representations of the god of love (painting, sculpture, &c.) he is represented as blind as well as winged. Herein Helena says artists represent the truth of life. Cf. Lyly's song—*Cupid and Campaspe*.

> All these did my Campaspe win:
> At last he set her both his eyes,
> She won, and Cupid blind did rise.

Of any .....**taste**—Taste, (*i.e.*, the smallest quantity) of true judgment. Love's judgments are erring. It is clear that by mind Helena means not intelligence or reason, but rather disposition, temperament.

237. **Wings**.....**eyes**—Wings and blindness—the two peculiarities of Cupid. Cf. Dibdin's song Love's blind they say, Love's winged they cry.

Figure—Symbolise; are figures, images, representations of.

Unheedy haste—Unheeding or heedless (*i.e.*, thoughtless) haste. Haste is symbolised by the 'wings' and heedlessness by the want of eyes.

238. **Therefore**—For the following reason (line 239). The word is now used only with reference to a statement already made.

A child—Cupid is always pictured as a boy.

239. **Because** .....Poetically, the errors of lovers are imputed to the imaginary god who is the embodiment of the idea of love.

Beguiled—Deceived, cheated. As children are apt to be.

240. **As waggish** ...As tricky boys playfully tell lies; commit a sort of perjury on others for the fun of it. Waggish is from wag, the noun, from the verb, which expresses movements of derision; **in game** = not really meaning it, in pretence and for sport; **themselves forswear** = pledge themselves falsely. Cf. *Matthew*, V. 33. The prefix *for* is usually intensive, or has something of the sense of the kindred 'from.'

241. **So the**.....Simile; boyishness being the ground of comparison.

Is perjured—The same as forswears himself; is convicted of untruth. Seems to combine the ideas of proving false and being convicted.

242. **Eyne**—The old form of the plural, used for the sake of rhyme. 'Eyne' is a contraction of *eyene* orig. a dissyllable. The plur. in *-en* (as in oxen) was once common. It is frequent in Spenser, and occasional in seventeenth century writers, as in *eyne, shoon*.

243. **He hailed down**—He showered. Hail is frozen water, resembling snow or ice, which falls (like big drops of rain) in what are called hail-stones (in shape and size usually resembling peas, though sometimes much larger or smaller).

Oaths.....Protestations that he loved me only and was not in any way devoted, or under any obligation, to any other lady.

Only mine = my faithful lover and no other body's. Only (orig. *onely*) is nearly the same as purely, entirely.

244. **Some heat**—Warmth of affection. According to the

far-fetched conceit of the text the growth of love for Hermia soon melted the hail-stones which were the expression of his love for Hermia. Hail readily melts in the sun or in heat.

245. **So**—Immediately, thereupon.

He dissolved—His affection for or loyalty to me dissolved and ceased to exist.

Showers of oaths did melt—The meaning is the same. The oaths that had fallen in showers of hail melted and were no more. Dissolved and melt are both used intransitively.

246. **Go tell**—A frequent Elizabethan manner. So in *John*, IX. 7, 'go wash.' Tell is usually parsed as the Infinitive, but the words may be often an abbreviation of 'go and tell.'

Helena in her jealousy and determination and mental disturbance resolves to betray the secret confided to her. As a consequence two couples are in the wood and the mistakes and intricacies of the plot follow.

248. **Intelligence**—Information. The word is often used of information obtained from spies, secret reports, &c. In an army there is an "intelligence department" finding out the movements of the enemy, &c. The folios read 'his,' either a correction of 'this' of the quartos, or a misprint.

249. **If I**.....If I receive thanks I shall have paid dearly for it (in giving the intelligence). In two ways she may be said to pay dearly. She enables Demetrius to follow her rival instead of allowing him to lose sight of Hermia for ever. This will keep up Demetrius' passion for Hermia. Secondly, she betrays a friend, which involves loss of honour —a dear expense indeed. Cf. the opening of Sonnet 129: the expense of spirit in a waste of shame. This second explanation, however, does not seem to be given by any editor. Perhaps the main point in the line is that the giving of thanks will be a direct manifestation of Demetrius' love towards her rival. Chambers takes 'dear' in the sense of 'glad,' which seems not in harmony with the next line.

250. **Herein**—Refers to the following not the preceding line.

Enrich my pain—Make my pain a means of riches or benefit. The pain is what is caused by the 'dear expense.' She hopes to be compensated or to have the pain overborne by the success of her little plan which is in any way possible to associate herself with and commend herself to Demetrius.

251. **His sight**—The sight of him. Doubtless she means his company. She will not see him very distinctly in the dark, but the pleasure is in being with him.

Thither—On the way thither (*i.e.*, to the meeting place).

As Helena alone knew the spot where Lysander and Hermia were to meet, it would be necessary for Demetrius to employ her as guide. On the way she would endeavour to insinuate herself into his affections, and also to make him feel the untrustworthiness of Hermia who was thus eloping with another. 'Thither' is here a dissyllable.

Back again—Back (*i.e.*, to Athens). The phrase is pleonastic.

SCENE II.

Here Pope began his fourth scene, and Fleay begins his third. The location in Quince's house is due to Capell. Quince acts throughout as the leader of the company. He is perhaps to be regarded both as author and as stage-manager. Bottom, on the other hand, wishes to act all the principal parts at once.

It is generally believed that in introducing these uneducated handicraftsmen Shakespeare is ridiculing or satirising some rival company of actors of his day. Thus in the incompetence and vulgarity of Bottom and his associates we may have a caricature of men whose defects were well-known to the theatre-loving population. Fleay thinks that the company satirised was that of the Earl of Sussex; and that Bottom, the chief clown, was intended for Robert Greene.

Quince is described as a carpenter and Snug as a joiner. These terms are now identical in meaning, but carpenter is probably used in a higher sense as a dealer in wood, joiner denoting simply a workman. Nicholas Bottom is a weaver and, perhaps, his name contains a play on the phrase 'bottom of thread.' Flute is a bellowsmender (not now a distinct craft) and he doubtless receives his name from his work in repairing musical wind instruments. Snout, the tinker, Starveling, the tailor, and also Snug have names suggestive of personal appearance. The word *quince* denotes a kind of fruit (Cydonian apple), the name being derived through O. Fr. *coin* from Gr. *Kudonia*, a city of Crete.

1. **Company**—party. A familiar word of the time, used both of companies of players and of companies of handicraftsmen.

2. **You were best**—Originally the construction was, to you it were (*i.e.*, would be), best. Impersonal construction was frequent in old English as in most languages. With the loss of inflections datives became indistinguishable from nominatives, and in course of time were supposed to be nominatives. Consequently except in a few familiar words or phrases im-

personal construction ceased. Such expressions as 'you were best' lingered among the uneducated, and therefore this is fittingly put into Bottom's mouth.

Generally—The wrong word used by Bottom instead of severally or individually, *i.e.*, one by one. Bottom attempts to speak learnedly, and continually makes ludicrous blunders.

3. **According to the scrip**—As in the written list. 'Scrip,' here the same as 'script,' a writing, a not infrequent form of it (Lat. *scriptum*). 'Scrip',a bag, is a totally different word.

4. **Scroll**—Roll of paper: here used for the manuscript containing the names of those who were to act. The word, though formed (with diminutive suffix *l*) from O. Fr. *escroue*, is ultimately of Teutonic origin.

5. **Which**—referring, according to the sense, to 'man's.' In Shakespeare's time the modern distinction of who and which was not established; hence it is unnecessary here to impute bad grammar to Quince.

Through all—by all the citizens of; a ludicrous example of conceit.

Play—Act; take part in the theatrical performance.

6. **Interlude**—Strictly a comic diversion between plays, or parts of a play. But in the middle of the sixteenth century the term was used for a special kind of comedy; intermediate between the older moralities and the later fully-developed comedy. Hence in Shakespeare's time it usually meant a short play where the action was not fully developed. Here it describes the short theatrical piece which was to be performed in the course of the marriage rejoicings of Theseus and Hippolyta. See Act V.

Duke, duchess—Theseus, Hippolyta. The latter is called duchess by anticipation.

7. **Wedding-day at night**—Evening of his wedding day. The juxtaposition of day and night though not necessarily inaccurate is intended to be slightly grotesque.

8. **First**.....Bottom wishes to be considered the leading actor, so he gives orders or instructions as if in authority.

10. **Grow to a point**—Ascend gradually to the conclusion. Instead of 'grow' the folios have 'grow on,' which seems intended for 'go on.' In II. ii. 119 'point' means summit or acme, but the reference here is to systematic procedure or definite method.

11. **Marry**—A sort of oath frequent in the Elizabethan plays. The word is corrupted from Mary (*i.e.*, the Virgin Mary) by whom it was customary to swear.

Our play is—The title of our play is. The title reveals the

subject matter; and thus Bottom's first inquiry is answered.

12. **Comedy.**—The meaning of this term in Greek was the same as in modern English, but in older English it was used of a play of any kind, and in Shakespeare's youth the meanings and boundaries of Comedy and Tragedy were unfixed. Audiences desired *plays* and received them in every variety and combination. Shakespeare may here be satirising the vague use of the term; or he may simply be exhibiting the rudeness of men who could find mirth in a sad story. In any case Quince and his friends neither know the meaning of Comedy nor any laws of dramatic propriety; they use the term generally associated with mirth or festivity, and they expect their audience to be as delighted as they are themselves with their grotesque diversion. It may be noted that even in Bacon, *Essays* 18, Comedy seems to be the general term for Drama.

Cruel—Here used in the sense of sad, pitiful.

Pyramus and Thisby—For the story, see Introduction. The spelling Thisby (for Thisbe) represents either the inaccurate pronunciation of Quince, or the bad scholarship of the writer of the scroll. It is probable that both names were mispronounced all through. In later scenes the folio has *Piramus*.

13. **Piece of work**—Probably the expression is chosen as that which would be natural to a weaver or dealer in cloth.

14. **Merry**—Bottom of course expects that the play will be something full of fun. The word is here chosen both to indicate Bottom's ignorance of the play (as the following lines show) and to show that the words lamentable and cruel do not seem to him to interfere with merriment. His forwardness in pronouncing on what he knows nothing of is also indicated.

15. **By the scroll**—One by one as written down.

Masters—Sirs, gentlemen.

Spread yourselves—Stand apart from one another (that we may see and distinguish you all).

16. **Nick**—Abbreviation of Nicholas. The name is intended to have a comic effect.

Part—Character.

17. **Set down for**—Appointed to act the part of.

18. **A lover or a tyrant?**—These are the two types of characters known to Bottom. Tyrants, such as Marlowe's Tamburlaine, were familiar on the English stage in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such a character would give Bottom his desired opportunity of bluster.

19. **Gallantly**—The reading of the quartos is gallant; of

the folios 'gallantly.' The term combines the ideas of bravery in war and chivalry in love.

21. **Ask some tears in the**.....Call forth (from the audience) tears on account of the true (and life-like) performance of it (which I shall give.)

22. **Look to**—Take care of, to prevent injury.

23. **Move storms**—Rouse a tempest of grief in the audience.

Condole—It is supposed that Bottom here uses the wrong word. Only twice does Shakespeare use this word; in both cases by unlearned blunderers (here and by Ancient Pistol in *Henry V*). Shakespeare would therefore seem not to have recognised the word as correct or pure English. Perhaps Bottom means that he will himself show grief, affect personal feeling in the matter. He does not quite realise that he is to kill himself and then be silent. [The use of 'condolement' in *Hamlet* I. 2. 93 for mourning shows that the word had not its modern meaning of sharing grief with, or expressing sympathy for, another].

24. **To the rest—Yet.** The separation of rest and yet is an emendation of Theobald, unsupported by quartos or folios; and of very doubtful value. The passage is obscure, though probably Bottom means the same as he says further down: Now name the rest (*now* taking the place of *yet*). In both cases after calling on Quince to proceed, he at once begins again himself. We imagine that yet = not yet specified, that yet remain.

Chief humour—Forte, characteristic excellence. Cf. the use of vein, line 36. 'Humour' was a term in very frequent use in Shakespeare's time to denote any distinguishing quality or peculiarity. The stage was full of humours, *i.e.*, of idiosyncracies, comical qualities. Every character was supposed to have some humour, *i.e.*, oddity or peculiarity developed to excess. Cf. the 'ruling passion' which Pope attributed to every one.

25. **Ercles**—Bottom's cockney pronunciation of Hercules, whose heroic labours were often represented on the stage. Hercules is a leading hero of Greek legend or mythology.

Rarely—With peculiar excellence; very finely.

26. **Tear**.....**in**—This seems to have been a familiar expression of the time, founded perhaps on some well-known example. There is no reference to Hercules' killing the lion. In Middleton's 'Roaring Girl' (1611) there is a character called Tear-cat, and in an earlier play, *Histrio-mastix*, there is a reference to tearing the cat upon a stage. Shakespeare is therefore referring (with quiet ridicule) to some

vulgarity of his time which was appropriate enough for Nick Bottom.

All split—*i.e.*, with laughter. The editors following Dyce make this a nautical expression, originally of bursting sails; but it is a familiar expression of universal usage, quite distinct from the mariners' phrase, and apparently due to the pain of excessive laughter.

27. **The raging rocks**..... This is a verse of magniloquent nonsense. Note that the first two and the last two lines owe their form to the desire of alliteration; which therefore (in its excess) Shakespeare seems to be ridiculing. The first four lines seem to say that the prison doors will be opened by an earthquake.

In the early editions 'the raging rocks' immediately follows 'split' and is followed by a semicolon. This error in punctuation may have been accidental, due to the compositors; or deliberate, of the editors; or designed by Shakespeare himself in his exhibition of Bottom. We may suppose that Bottom had the stanza before him in type or manuscript; and that after using the word 'split' he suddenly read the opening words pausing after rocks. This would give the word 'split' a more grotesque character. In Act V. l. 108—117 the speech of the Presenter is thus mispunctuated throughout. It is a device of comedy for the ridicule of an unlearned reader.

31. **Phibbus' car**—the car (or chariot) of Phœbus, *i.e.*, the sun.

33. **Make and mar.**—The correct expression is 'make or mar,' *i.e.*, create or destroy, improve or injure. The origin of this expression (the frequent use of which is perhaps intended to be ridiculed here) may not be known. It was used of success or failure in life in a letter regarding himself written by Thomas Cromwell who afterwards became chief Minister of Henry VIII. The contrast of success and failure naturally found expression in proverbs or epigrams. Cf. the Scotch proverb 'make a spoon or spoil a horn.'

34. **The foolish Fates.**—This is the foolishest expression of all. Of course if the fates were to be either made or marred they would not be Fates at all; and might be called 'foolish' from their claim of an unreal power. Bottom seems to believe not in Fate but in Chance.

35. **Lofty.**—Sublime, so Bottom thinks.

36. **Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein**—Referring to the verses just uttered. This magniloquent utterance is in the vein or style or manner of Hercules, the representative tyrant. Tyrant probably has not the modern meaning of oppressor,

but denotes an embodiment of power, force, supremacy. The word (which should not have a final *t*) is derived from Gr. *turannos*, a sovereign, or master.

37. **Condoling**—Pathetic, tender. See above, l. 23.

38. **Bellows-mender**.—Repairer of wind instruments of various kinds.

40. **On you**—As your part (which you are to act). On = upon.

41. **What**—What kind of character? Flute does not even know that Thisbe is a lady.

A wandering knight?—Or knight-errant? Flute must have heard some of the tales of chivalry; and he imagines that this character may be of the famous type.

43. **Let me not play**—The parts of women were in the Elizabethan drama played by men, chiefly by boys. Flute is apparently a youth who fears lest his growing beard will have to be shaved off.

45. **All one**—All the same (whether you have a beard or not).

In a mask—An alternative method by which as far as appearance went an adult man could represent a woman. In respect of voice a boy was preferable. A mask was a false face used for the occasion. Women in those days often wore masks, and thus the recognition of the mask by the audience would not have proved or even necessarily suggested that the wearer was a man. This use of the word masque (for visor) is secondary, being derived from the primary meaning of entertainment. From the Arabic.

46. **As small as you will**—So as to resemble a female voice as much as possible. 'Small' means not so much low as thin, fine; but in endeavouring to counterfeit a woman's voice the speaker would lower as well as otherwise modify his voice.

47. **An**—If. This 'an' is frequent in older writers, and in modern poets that affect the antique. It is a Scandinavian use of the conj. 'and.' And indeed 'and' is the true reading here.

Hide—Disguise, *i.e.*, by wearing a mask.

Let me play—Bottom is represented as a conceited, self-assertive man, ready not only to be a loud-ranting tyrant, but also to play any number of parts. Some think that Shakespeare is thus satirising some actors of his time who thus made themselves troublesome to their fellows.

48. **Monstrous little**—Bottom understands 'small' to mean simply little. He uses 'monstrous' in the sense of very or wonderfully without knowing the grotesqueness thereof.

The word was probably a frequent term of vulgar usage.

49. **Thisne, Thisne**—Possibly for *thissen*, an old form of the adv. formed from 'this'; = thus. In the early editions the word is printed in italics and with capitals, as if the printers regarded it as a proper name, *i.e.*, as a mispronunciation of Thisbe. And the repetition of the word rather favours this view. It is as if Bottom were muttering the name to himself, trying to fix his monstrously little voice with the effect that this monstrous form became audible. Mr. Furness accepts the former view which gives best sense, but it does not account for the spelling which suggests a second syllable *-ne*, or for the italics, or the capitals, or the repetition. Shakespeare must have intended confusion.

Ah Pyramus—What Thisbe is supposed to say to her lover. **Lady** = lady-love.

56. **Tinker**—Worker in metals; maker or mender of pots, jugs, &c. The name is said to be imitative, *i.e.*, formed from the sound of the hammering or working.

58. **You Pyramus' father**—You must play Pyramus' father. The parts of Pyramus' father and of Thisbe's father and mother are not represented at all in Shakespeare's version of the story (Act V). They are probably specified here in order to allow a larger number of characters in this comic list.

59. **Joiner**—Carpenter. The usual term of Teutonic origin was 'wright.'

60. **Here.... fitted**—Instead of the 'here' of the quartos the folios have there, which is doubtless correct; the meaning being—I hope the play is now fitted. Fitted, or adjusted, means that a suitable actor is appointed to each and all of the parts.

61. **Lion's part written.**—As the lion does not speak this sentence is introduced partly for its comic absurdity, partly to give Bottom another opportunity of self-assertion.

63. **Extempore.**—Without study or preparation (Latin *ex, tempore.*)

64. **I will roar, that**.....roar (to such an extent) that... Such is Bottom's conceit.

65. **I will do** .....More correct English would be, it will do...

66. **Make the Duke say.**—The Duke will be so delighted as to call for a repetition.

69. **Fright**—Frighten. Doubtless once a correct form.

70. **That were enough to**—That would be a sufficient ground for the Duke's hanging us all. **Hang** is in the text used causatively.

71. **Every mother's son**—Each one of us. 'Every' qualifies son, not mother.

73. **Wits.....discretion**—'Out of their wits' literally means deprived of reason: in which case discretion (or judgment) would be lost. Bottom plays on the literal meaning of the phrase and then with a full consciousness of the importance of himself and friends observes that insane people might hang them.

74. **Aggravate**—He means, alleviate, subdue.

75. **As any sucking dove**—This is exquisitely absurd. The dove is gentle, but it neither sucks nor roars. The gentle sucker is the lamb.

76. **An 'twere any**—As if it were a. The dove has led Bottom to think of another bird and one more famous for its song. This use of an (or and) is not easily explained. A similar example occurs in *Troilus and Cressida*, I. 2. 188.

77. **You can play**—Quince succeeds in silencing Bottom by flattery.

78. **Sweet-faced .. .like**—These three descriptions are practically the same. They all mean good-looking. Proper is what one ought to be—here referring to external appearance, though of figure perhaps more than of face. Gentleman-like refers largely to manner.

79. **Summer's day**—A proverbial expression. A summer's day is long (longer in Europe than in the East); it is also from the geniality of the season the kind of day in which one will see most travellers. The meaning of the clause therefore is: as proper a man as one can at any time hope to see.

80. **You must needs**—No other is competent: you only are worthy. Needs is an adverb, *s* having been an old adverbial termination. The same phrase occurs in *John* IV. 4.

81. **What beard**—What kind or colour of beard.

Were I best—The construction is a corruption of, were it best for me, after the analogy of other substitutions of the personal for the impersonal form.

83. **What you will**—Any kind you may choose.

84. **Discharge**—Perform.

Either your.....Bottom here proposes four alternative colours. They are all bright colours, more or less golden.

Your straw colour—The straw colour you are familiar with. Dried straw is of a light yellowish colour.

85. **Orange-tawny**—Dark orange. Tawny means dark yellow. The original form was *tanny*: 'Fr. *tan* being the bark of a young oak tree with which leather was tanned.

Purple-in-grain—Reddish purple. The Lat. *granum* meant grain or corn, but in low (or folk) Latin the term was used as an equivalent of *coccus* (a berry) which had come to be applied to the cochineal insect. From this insect a red dye was prepared, and the adj. *coccinus* meant simply red. So this vermeil or scarlet colour was denoted by 'grain.' The word purple (Lat. *purpura*, the purple-fish, Gr. *porphura*) was used by the ancients of brilliant colours and not of the dark shade now known as purple. In *Milton* the word purple is used of bright colour, the word grain of colour generally. But earlier (and here) 'grain' refers directly to the colour derived from the *coccus* insect. The special force of the phrase in-grain seems to have been durability. The colour thus produced was recognised as lasting. In *Twelfth Night*, I. v. 253, Olivia says of her complexion: "'Tis in grain, sir; 'twill endure wind and weather." Similarly in an earlier play, the *Comedy of Errors*, III. ii. 107, Dromio says "'Tis in grain: Noah's flood could not" remove it. Purple-in-grain then means purple that has undergone this well-known dye. The phrase is used here as the name of a familiar dye and not on account of any virtue of permanence pertaining to it. It may be noted that the words crimson (of Oriental origin: Ar. and Pers. *qirmizi*, Sansk. *krimi*) and vermilion (Lat. *vermis*, a worm) have reference to the same colour and process as cochineal.

86. **French-crown-colour**—The colour of the French coin called a crown, a small gold piece. This Bottom describes as the perfect yellow. He begins with the plainest colour (that of straw) and has risen to the perfect or true golden colour as he imagines.

The folios have 'coloured,' *i.e.*, having the colour of (the French crown), which is a deliberate revision. According to the quarto reading the three words should be hyphened.

88. **French crowns**—French heads: the crown or top of the head being used for the head generally. There is thus a pun on the word crown. There is also an unkind reference to baldness which was supposed to be more prevalent in France than elsewhere.

89. **Bare-faced**—The baldness is supposed to have affected the beards, so that there is no hair anywhere. This repartee seems rather poor for Shakespeare. Possibly he intended Quince to insinuate the secondary (moral) meaning of bare-faced, viz., bold, impudent, unrestrained.

Masters—As we say, gentlemen.

90. **Entreat, request, desire**—This triple usage is probably for emphasis. Quince has to impress on his irregular and

untrained companions the necessity of fulfilling their engagement.

91. **Con them by** .. ..Commit to memory their parts before ...Con (A.S. *cunnian*, to seek to know) is akin to can, ken, cunning—all expressive of the idea of knowledge.

92. **Palace wood**—The wood which is part of the grounds belonging to the palace.

Without—Outside.

93. **Rehearse**—Go over. A term used technically of going over plays in preparation for the public exhibition. In *Acts* XIV the term is used of going over in description events previously enacted. The word is formed from hearse in its sense of harrow, and refers to the necessity in harrowing of going repeatedly over the same ground.

94. **Dogged with company**—Closely followed by persons eager to hear and see the play. The verb 'dog' is derived from the substantive and refers to a dog's walking behind his master.

95. **Our devices known**—Our devices will be known beforehand. 'Devices' refers not so much to the play as to the contrivances and schemes for the acting of it.

96. **Draw**.....**properties**—Make out a list of things necessarily pertaining to the performance; all special requirements of this particular play. The word property or propriety (from Lat. *proprius*, own) denoted things specially belonging to one, characteristic, &c. Here it is used in a technical sense, belonging to the stage, for the stage requisites of the play. Lists of 'properties' were drawn up in connection with most plays.

97. **Fail me not**—Be sure to be present. Quince speaks as the responsible party. Fail is from Lat. *fallere*, to deceive.

99. **Obscenely**—Another word used by mistake. Deighton suggests that the meaning intended is 'seemly' as in *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. i. 145, where the clown says "when it comes so smoothly off, so obscenely, as it were so fit." Others have suggested obscurely, *i.e.*, privately, unseen.

Courageously—Probably Bottom means boisterously. Or the term may describe simply the easy confidence with which they will act when they have no critics.

Take pains—Spare no effort. A secondary meaning assigned to the plural of pain; so adj. pains-taking.

100. **Be perfect**—Master your parts thoroughly.

Adieu—Originally Fr. *a dieu*, (I commit you) to God.

This sentence is in the old editions printed as the conclusion of Bottom's speech. In the Collier MS., however, the words

are given to Quince as the beginning of his last speech. This has been approved by Collier, Dyce and others. And it is probably an improvement. Quince is the manager of the business. It may be said that Bottom was eager to assume the manager's duty; but on the other hand it is not likely that he would have given so good an advice as, take pains.

101. **Duke's oak**—Some favourite oak tree or grove of Theseus is imagined and named as the place of meeting for rehearsal.

102. **Enough**—You have said enough.

Hold. . . **bow-strings**—This obscure phrase is doubtless intended as a strong pledge that they will meet. Hold means keep promise; cut bow-strings is the punishment if the promise is not kept. Capell explained the phrase as pertaining to archery. When a man failed to keep an important engagement thereon, his bow-strings were cut as the symbol of removal from the company of archers. The phrase 'cut bow-strings' may have been used in a general sense of the deprivation of power, the withdrawal of the means of accomplishing an object. As there is a proverb of having "two strings to one's bow," *i.e.*, two objects in view or possible attainments, so there may have been a counter one of having no string at all. In which case 'cut bow-strings' may have stood for any kind of punishment involving loss. Capell's explanation is, however, probably right.

Some editors directly connect 'hold' with 'bow-strings.' Thus Malone says: "To meet *whether bow-strings hold or are cut* is to meet in all events. Similarly Deighton makes the phrase equivalent to 'whatever happens' and parses hold and cut as neuter subjunctives. This seems to us improbable. The word 'hold' is popularly used, in a hundred applications, in the sense of hold good, keep fast, do not fail or let go, and has no reference whatever to bow-strings, so that the last two words seem to be a quite distinct phrase.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The description of the Scene, and the stage direction, are due to Capell. The folio has: *Enter a Fairy at one door and Robin Goodfellow* at another; and in lines 1, 18, 42, the character is described as Robin, not Puck. 'Puck' was inserted instead by Rowe. In lines 154, 175 and in Act III, Sc. 2, the folio has 'Puck,' while in Act V he is again 'Robin.'

This duality of description Fleay connects with separate editions of the play, and in this case considers that the description 'Puck' indicates a later edition. Puck and the Fairy are in the service of the king and the queen (Oberon and Titania) respectively. See notes on lines 34—40.

With this Act begins the second night of the play. In the evening the Fairies, a new set of characters, come forth as they were believed to do. Presently the pursuing lovers, anticipating the eloping couple, are on the spot, and at the end of the first scene we learn that the fairy power (like the *deus ex machina*) is to interfere with and determine the main action of the plot.

1. **How now**... ..? Puck and the Fairy meet from opposite sides as persons walking and Puck salutes by asking the Fairy where she is going. How now? = what are you about (or engaged in) now?

As regards metre, spirit is to be read as a dissyllable and whether (as usually in Shakespeare) as a monosyllable. The first accent falls on now. Abbott and others make both 'spirit' and 'whether' monosyllables, and put the stress on the opening syllable, thus reading the line as (what they would call) trochaic, which is certainly wrong. All the poetry of the play is in rising stress (or what may be called iambic).

3. **Thorough**—The same as through. The reading of the folios and second quarto is through. Thorough represents an old form *thurgh* (as borough is a variety of burgh). In hundreds of words the vowel with *r* has changed its position. Thus thirty should be thrity (from three). In many cases both forms survive: thus brown and burn are from the same root, burst and breast, &c. It is doubtful whether thorough is here a monosyllable or a dissyllable. It must be exactly parallel to the preceding 'over' which in popular speech is often a monosyllable, but is then usually written o'er.

There are diverse ways in which the Fairy's speech may be scanned. The metre should, we think, be treated as iambic, not trochaic. It may be represented thus: (a dash indicates the want of a syllable, such as is normal in our older poetry)—

O'er hill, o'er dale, through bush, through brier,
O'er park, o'er pale, through flood, through fire,
—— I do wander every where
—— Swifter than the moon's — sphere;
—— And I serve the fairy queen
To dew her orbs upon the green.

This was the ordinary measure of rhyming octosyllables.

The objections to it are, (1) that it makes the fairy speak faster and crowd ideas more rapidly than one would expect, and (2) that the rhyme of dale and pale points another way. It seems best therefore to read—

— Over hill, — over dale
— Thorough bush, — thorough brier
— Over park, — over pale
— Thorough flood, — thorough fire
— I do wander — every where
— Swifter than | the moon's — sphere.

In line 6 the last syllable of wander is to be regarded as extra (and followed by a pause) rather than as the beginning of the second part of the line. Each line is divided into two parts and has a cesura (or break) in the middle. Such is the method of the short metre romance poetry. Shakespeare may, however, have followed some popular song or ballad metre without analytic or historic knowledge of the form.

Note the alliterations of lines 3, 4, 5. Alliteration or head-rhyme was an essential feature of Old English poetry. Shakespeare, who often ridicules the excess of it, calls it "affecting the letter."

4. **Pale**—Paling; the fence of a park. **Park** (Mid. Eng. *parrok*) is strictly enclosed ground, and was contrasted with 'forest' the open hunting ground.

5. **Flood**—Water, whether of river or ocean. The substantive from "flow."

In these lines the four elements, earth, air, fire, water, are intended. The fairy in passing over dales and over pales will pass through the air; in going through bushes or briers it will probably move on the ground. In the older mythology there were spirits of each element. In the system of Paracelsus (a philosopher of the sixteenth century) they were named, gnome, sylph, salamander, nymph (corresponding to earth, air, fire, water, respectively). Shakespeare, however, intends nothing more than the popular ideas of elves and fairies; and thus assigns to one fairy freedom in various elements.

Moon's Sphere—If Shakespeare is using the language of the Ptolemaic philosophy, the moon's sphere is the hollow sphere or circle in which the moon resides and moves; the lowest of the ten (or nine) spheres that successively encompass our earth (the centre) and constitute our universe. According to this system, the moon, the five planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn), and the sun had each a sphere of its own. Beyond these was the sphere of the fixed stars;

ninth was the crystalline, and last of all the *primum mobile* or outermost rind which had the power of moving the whole system. As each sphere made a complete revolution round the earth in twenty-four hours, the speed implied was much greater than that required in the Copernican or real system. The moon as the lowest moved slower than the others, but still with an incredible swiftness; "incredible how swift" is Milton's phrase of the sun (*P. L.*, IV. 593).

It would make good enough reading—and correct science—to make 'moon's sphere' here equivalent to the sphere (*i.e.*, orb or globe) of the moon. The Gr. *sphaira* ordinarily meant a ball; and we find no proof that this was not Shakespeare's meaning. (In *Milton* the Ptolemaic usage is frequent.)

Note that sphere rhymes with where; as also in Milton's *Comus* (241) and even in Pope and other writers of the first half of last century. The vowel represents the Gr. *ai*, Lat. *ae*. Our vowel pronunciation has greatly altered since the time of Shakespeare. In his time this vowel had an intermediate sound (now lost in correct English, though familiar at least in the Sanskritic languages of India) and not the broad sound in 'where.'

Moon's is usually explained as a dissyllable; and indeed the earlier form of the genitive or possessive would have been moonis (or moones), but this dissyllabic pronunciation was obsolete before the time of Shakespeare and is certainly not intended here. It is in accordance with the original and true genius of the English language that the unstressed syllables may at any time be wanting. This was carried so far that a kind of metre whose normal line consisted of eight syllables might have lines of four syllables each being firmly stressed. On these strongly stressed syllables the voice dwells so that the shortened line occupies the full (or average) length of time in utterance. In the present case the voice dwells on 'moon's' and the hearer (once familiar with the metre) is quite unconscious of the loss of a syllable between it and 'sphere.' Another possible example is line 58, 'But room Fairy' where Dyce has altered the text by the insertion of a 'now.' Guest quoted in illustration of the present passage lines from Burns and Moore (two men of exquisite lyric genius and the interpreters of the music of their countries). Moore has the stanza—

> While gazing on the moon's light
> A moment from her smile I turned,
> To look at orbs that more bright
> In lone and distant glory burned

where the words 'moon's' and 'more' are uttered with a change of accent and a lengthening of the voice. Burns has several lines, similarly ending with the phrase 'yon toon' (town) as

I'll gang nae mair to yon toon

where the voice is similarly changed and lengthened in the pronunciation of 'yon.' The effect to those that know it is highly pleasing. It may be noted that this variety is usually found in the penultimate syllable or beat before the last; and perhaps an occult connection might be traced between it and the fifth foot of a hexameter line.

8. **Serve**—Spirits are supposed to serve or minister to higher beings. Cf. the expression 'ministering spirits' (*Heb.* I. 14). Here one spirit serves another.

Fairy queen—Titania. This Fairy acknowledges her suzerainty. Shakespeare invests the fairy world with a polity and government in some respects similar to that of human beings.

9. **To dew**.....This is the Fairy's present task or service. The hour is early evening, when the dew-drops are formed. Dew = be-dew, *i.e.*, moisten with dew-drops, bathe with dew.

Her.....**green**—The green is the meadow or pasture land, so called from the colour of the grass. Titania's orbs are rings of grass of a different shade of green which are to be seen here and there. These rings or circles are usually three or four yards in diameter and the thickness of the richer green (constituting the circumference of the circle) one or two yards. The poetic explanation was that the fairies danced at night round the ring and that thereafter a particular fairy regularly watered the orbit to prevent injury to the grass. The scientific explanation has reference to the growth of a fungus. "The so-called fairy-rings on hills and downs were produced by the better and more vigorous growth of the grass, owing to the excess of nitrogen afforded by the fungi which composed the ring of the previous year" (quoted in the *Variorum* edition from the *British Medical Journal*, 28th July 1894; address by Dr. J. Sidney Turner).

10. **The cowslips**—This little flower was supposed to be a favourite of the fairies. Though less than a foot in height it was tall to the inhabitants of the fairy world; taller than even the queen of fairy land. The ordinary elf was small, sometimes to invisibility; but their size grew with their rank. Titania's imaginary pensioners or body-guard would have been drawn from the higher orders.

Pensioners—The reference in this comparison is to an order

of military courtiers belonging to Queen Elizabeth. These were tall handsome gentlemen drawn from the gentry or nobility of the country. The name 'pensioner' must have been then a word of honour.

Be—An obsolete form superseded by 'are' (which was taken from the North of England dialect). 'Am' is akin to Lat. *sum*, while 'be' is akin to the perfect *fui*.

11. **Gold-coats**—The flower is yellow or golden, therefore compared to the rich dresses (made of cloth of gold) worn by the pensioners.

Spots, rubies, freckles—On the yellow flower are spots or freckles of a dark-red or ruby colour which are compared to the ornaments worn on their dress by Elizabeth's gentlemen-pensioners. Parkinson is quoted as describing in the ordinary field cowslip "fair yellow flowers with spots of a deeper yellow at the bottom of each leaf." In *Cymbeline* the spots are referred to as "crimson drops in the bottom of a cowslip."

12. **Rubies**—The ruby is a gem of red colour. (Lat. *ruber*, red). Either a metaphor or fairy science.

Fairy favours—Gifts conferred on them as a token of the favour or friendship of the fairies (or of the fairy queen).

13. **Freckles**—Small spots; now used chiefly of spots on the face produced chiefly by exposure to the sun or weather. The termination *-le* is diminutive. There are two adjectives freckled and flecked, both meaning spotted, but the latter describing larger spots (as on cattle). Both words are from the Scandinavian, and they must have been originally the same. In very early times the letters *r* and *l* tended to pass into one another.

Savours.—Odours, fragrance. The fairy thus claims that the fragrance is due to the fairies, being situated in the spots or qualities impressed by them on the flowers. 'Savour' is now used only of taste. In the New Testament. *Ephesians* V. 2, it is used as here of a 'sweet-smelling savour.' It is derived from Lat. *sapere*, to taste, or to be wise.

14. **Go seek.**—See above I. i. 260. Go is thus used almost as an auxiliary. 'Seek' is the infinitive, probably.

15. Note that in this line the metre becomes decasyllabic. The poet passes from the lyric form and the highly fanciful utterance to the normal style of the play. This line is believed to be imitated in a play, *Dr. Doddypoll*, that is supposed, though uncertainly, to have existed in 1596.

Pearl—Metaphor. See above I. i. 211. There is reference to an ancient belief that pearls were formed from dew-drops imbibed by the cockles.

Ear—This is what may be called a personifying metaphor. It is in keeping with the description of the cowslips as pensioners, *i.e.*, with the personification of the passage. The dew-drop hanging from the cowslip is likened to a pearl (or ear-ring) hanging from a lady's ear, or in this case apparently a gentleman's.

16. **Lob of spirits**—Big lump of a spirit; what Milton calls "the lubber fiend" (*L'Allegro*, 110). Lob is a Welsh word meaning a stupid fellow. It is akin to lubber and lump; also to lap (loose folds of cloth), lobe (of the ear), limp, &c. Puck is represented as a big coarse, semi-human spirit in comparison with the tiny and spiritual creatures of fairy land.

I'll be gone—I shall be off (for the fulfilment of my duties).

17. **Elves**—Elf is the Old English or Teutonic word corresponding to, though not quite identical with, the fays (or fairies) of Romance. In Old English the letter *f* served the purposes both of *f* and *v* (*i.e.*, might be unvoiced or voiced). The *v* now used in the plural is a comparatively modern introduction. But it may not have involved any change of sound.

Anon—Immediately: lit. in one (moment or instant). A frequent word in early poetry—the second syllable having been pronounced long, not short as now.

18. **The king**—Oberon.

Keep his revels—Hold an entertainment. 'Revel' is an appropriate term for a fairy reception as it indicates dancing and music—the peculiar exercise of the elves. The expression is taken from court life.

20. **Oberon**—See Introduction. The name is a French form corresponding to Alberich, an elfin dwarf of Teutonic legend.

Passing fell—Surpassingly furious.

Wrath—The adj.; usually written *wroth*. The A.S. form wrath becomes wroth in Modern English by regular change. In rare instances the gradual change was arrested; and both forms of this word may have existed in Shakespeare's time.

21. **Because that**—Because; for the reason that.

As her attendant—In attendance upon her; as an aid-de-camp.

Hath—As this word is a contraction of *haveth* it may have been pronounced broad in Shakespeare's day. Anyhow it is meant to rhyme with 'wrath.'

22. **Boy**—Cf. below lines 122—137. Apparently the child is now grown up, and Oberon (as we may suppose) has become jealous of his queen's attentions to her favourite page.

23. **Changeling**—A tri-syllable, formed from change. The word usually denotes a child left by the fairies instead of one carried off. It was an old belief that the fairies played this cruel trick, usually carrying off an exceptionally fine child and substituting an ill-favoured one. Here as Shakespeare is describing fairy-land it has the reverse meaning; *i.e.*, it denotes a human child, one of royal blood too (not the fairy child left with the king). Spenser in describing St. George of England explains the word—

> From thence a Faerie thee unweeting reft
> There as thou slepst in tender swaddling band,
> And her base elfin brood there for thee left.
> Such, men do chaungelings call so chaunged by
> Faeries' theft.

24. **Jealous Oberon**—Oberon fears Titania is in love with her aide-de-camp. It is highly humorous to impute such humanities to fairies. Jealous is a form of zealous (Gr. *zelos*).

Would have—Wishes to have . . as.

25. **Knight of his train**—In the king's own retinue, so as not to be in the presence or company of Titania who has a separate suite of her own.

Trace the forests—To go out with the king on hunting expeditions. Mr. Furness thinks 'trace' is used in the restricted sense of tracking (and following up) the game. He also says that here (and also in Milton's *Comus*, 423) the word is used intransitively—a statement that seems unintelligible. Elsewhere (in *Much Ado About Nothing*, III. i. 16.) Shakespeare has "trace this alley up and down" where nothing is tracked, and in the passage in *Milton* there is no reference to game. Indeed Milton, remembering Shakespeare, substituted 'trace' for 'walk through' which he originally wrote. The meaning therefore seems to be simply traverse. 'Trace' is derived from the French; ultimately from the Latin *trahere*.

Forests wild—Manly exercise is thus contrasted with the effeminate life of Titania's court. Forests—which now means thick woods—formerly meant open hunting grounds. See on line 4. From Lat. *foris*, out of doors.

26. **Perforce**—Forcibly.

27. **Crowns**—Garlands him. Lat. *corona*, a wreath.

Makes—Treats him as beloved; makes him the object of her delight.

28. **They**—The king and queen.

Grove or green—Among the trees, or in the meadows; fairy resorts.

29. **Fountain clear**—Another favourite resort of imaginary beings, fairies, nymphs, &c.

Spangled starlight sheen—Sheen is here probably an adj (= bright, shining) so that the noun starlight has an amphi dextral adj.—as is a mannerism of Milton. But it is notabl that Milton probably following this passage uses *sheen* as a substantive "far above in spangled sheen" *(Comus,* 1003 And it is possible that he regarded starlight as the adjective The balance of the phrase with 'fountain clear' seems deci sive for regarding 'starlight' as the substantive. The wor 'sheen' is derived from 'show' and was in Mid. English a adjective, though in Modern English it is used chiefly as noun; as in Byron's line:

> The sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea
> When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

The noun 'spangle' was used originally of a metal clasp, the of a shining ornament. The most frequent use of the adjec tive is its application to the sky. The whole phrase of th text means "in a bright starry night."

There is something not quite satisfactory in the text, esp cially in the use of 'by' which seems to govern the two phrase in two different senses [beside the fountain, during (or unde the starlight]. If "by fountain" refers to day-time, then th meaning of the line is by day or night. Otherwise the con trast may be of water looked down on, and the sky looke up to.

30. **But they do square**—Without squaring, *i.e.*, witho quarrelling in loud language. This peculiar meaning wa borne by the word in the sixteenth century. Perhaps th idea was to be "even with," to have their differences out o equal terms.

That—So that, so fiercely that.

For fear—A quarrel of spirit-princes, as of giants o demons, must be something terrible to listen to. The tim followers crouch in terror, and seek to hide themselves i caves.

31. **Acorn-cups**—These are the hollows the shudderin little fairies creep into. The fruit of the oak tree is an ova shaped nut which grows out of a cup-shaped base.

32. **Either**—A monosyllable.

Making—Or make; your figure, or, perhaps, lineament Shape and make are not very different; the former is le definite and minute. It is to be remembered that Puck h a shape of his own.

33. **Shrewd and knavish**—These words also are near

identical. **Shrewd** was original the pp. of the verb **shrew**, to curse. In the Elizabethan age it meant malicious; now it means clever, clear-headed, far-seeing. Cf. III. ii. 300-301.

Sprite—The reading of the folios is 'spirit'; but the pronunciation must be sprite, as in first quarto. The form sprite is often used (and probably here) where something of contempt is expressed.

34. **Robin Goodfellow**—This name was given him to propitiate him. It was in the power of the spirit to aid or injure. 'Robin' is a familiar corruption of 'Robert.'

35—39. These verses summarise the tricks that were popularly believed to be played by this troublesome 'sprite.' Cf. Milton's *L'Allegro*, 104—114.

35. **Villagery**—Villages or, perhaps, farms. The Latin *villa* meant a farm-house, and *villaticus* (whence village) pertaining to a farm-house. Johnson's explanation—a district of villages—was objected to by W. A. Wright who explained it as a collection of villagers, making the termination *y* and not *ry*. We think Johnson right, only that in Shakespeare's time village had not, at least exclusively, taken the meaning of hamlet. In *Comus*, 166, 'villager' is used of a rural peasant interested in farm work. The termination is, we think, *ry* as in Jewry (*John* VII. 1).

36. **Skim milk**—Here there is a sharp change of construction, skim being governed by 'you,' not by 'he.' Such inconsistencies were thought little of by the Elizabethans To 'skim the milk' is to take off the cream formed on the top; which of course is the richest part.

Labour... quern—Work with the hand-mill for grinding corn. The noise and movement of the quern, when no one was using it, was of course calculated to frighten simple people; and it was wrong to grind the corn when meal was not wanted. The quern was an ancient contrivance—originally consisting of a revolving stone moved by a handle (such as may still be seen in India)—for grinding corn before the later meal mills were available.

37. **Bootless**—Without effect or benefit. 'Boot' is akin to *bet*, the positive of better, best, and means advantage.

Breathless—On account of the labour. The housewife finding that butter is not forming has to work harder, exerting all her might whirling the board or shaft of the churn. The process of churning is dependent on the weather and other conditions: so that butter may be obtained sometimes in twenty minutes, sometimes only after a hour or two. In the latter case the evil influence of the fairy was imagined.

Churn—Here the verb. A churn is a cylindrical wooden vessel in which butter is formed from cream, by a process of agitation. 'Churn' is said to be allied to 'corn,' and was used primarily not of the vessel, but of the process of thickening, or of forming a *kernel*.

38. **Drink**—Ale or beer; which used to be home-brewed.

Bear no barm—Yield no yeast. Barm is still the familiar provincial name for this produce of fermentation. A certain quantity of it is required to produce fermentation in every time of brewing. Ale that bears no barm (or frothy surface) must be dull, flat, insipid. The same defect of the ale is described in Reginald Scott's *Discovery of Witchcraft* as having 'no head.'

39. **Mislead night-wanderers**—Lead astray (in wanton mischief) travellers by night. This belongs to Puck and his kindred as well as to Jack o' Lantern. The words may have been lingering in Milton's mind when (*P.L.*, IX. 634—642) he compared Satan to a "wandering fire" which—

> Hovering and blazing with delusive light
> Misleads the amazed night-wanderer from his way.

Laughing..... **harm**—The same thing is expressed by Drayton in his *Nymphidia*, also of Puck—

> And leading us makes us to stray
> Long winter's nights out of the way,
> And when we stick in mire and clay
> He doth with laughter leave us.

40. **Those**—An anacolouthon, such as is frequent in the older and less logical syntax. Of those.....the work.

Hobgoblin—This ugly term is here given as a name that flattered and pleased Puck. *Hob* was a term used of clownish spirits. In a play of Beaumont and Fletcher (*Mons. Thomas*, IV. 6) we find 'elves, hobs and fairies.' The word is a corruption of Robin. 'Goblin' is from low Latin *cobalus*, a demon or mountain spirit; Gr. *kobalos*, a demon or rogue.

Sweet Puck—Puck (or Pook, Pouke) was a name of an order of evil spirits, and was sometimes applied to the devil himself. The word is found in one form or other in nearly all the Teutonic languages (Dutch, *spook*, Fries, *puk*, Icelandic, *puki*, &c.) Although Puck and Hobgoblin are not inviting names, it does not follow that the mischievous spirit was not proud of his correct appellation; but the epithet 'sweet' doubtless charmed him.

41. In this case Puck showed his good qualities. Tyndale mentions his sweeping the house, washing the dishes, &c.

42. Note that the Fairy uses 'thou' and Puck 'you.'

As the text stands this line wants a foot,—the two parts making only eight syllables. The Collier MS. begins Puck's speech with the word Fairy which is a possible solution. Or as 'speakest,' a dissyllable, is in the first quarto, it is possible that a following syllable—me, it, so, all—fell out.

43. **Merry**—Playful, sportive, tricky. **Wanderer** describes the restless activity of the creature.

44. **Jest**—Puck here compares himself to a court jester, an important functionary in the feudal times. The original form of the word was *gests* (Lat. *res gestæ*).

45. **Bean-fed**—Fed on beans and not merely on hay. Well-fed horses are now fed on corn.

46 **Silly foal**—Silly, meaning simple, was a frequent epithet of animals. Of sheep it was the standing epithet. Here the text is doubtful as the first quarto has 'filly foal,' which must mean a female colt. Strictly speaking, however, this phrase is (at least in modern usage) a contradiction in terms as a foal is under and a filly over one year of age. It seems, therefore, best to follow the folios and second quarto. The confusion is doubtless due to the resemblance between an *f* and the old form of *s*. Filly and foal are etymologically akin to each other and to the Latin *pullus*.

47. **Sometime**—Sometimes. So above, line 38 and often. Now the form 'sometime' means, once on a time.

48 **Gossip's bowl**—This was a well-known drink consisting of ale, nutmeg, sugar, toast and roasted apples; perhaps the same as Milton's 'spicy nut brown ale' (*L'Allegro*, 100). Originally a gossip (god-sib) was a sponsor and the bowl was the christening cup (*i.e.*, used at infant baptism). Gradually the terms came to be used of any friendly festivity; and that meaning is sufficient here. Later on gossip came to mean one who indulges in idle or scandalous talk.

49. **In very** .. ..Very is an adjective. Lat. *verus*, true. Puck could assume various forms, and when he assumed the shape of an apple the old woman would not suspect that he was anything but what was expected in a properly-made bowl of spiced ale.

Crab—A wild apple. The crab tree is thorny and the fruit is small and sour in comparison with an ordinary apple. Because of its wildness and sourness it was generally roasted for use. The word is from the Scandinavian, but possibly allied to 'crabbed' which is from crab, a shell-fish.

49. **Bob**—Strike against.

50. **Dewlap**—Neck. The term is properly used of the

lower neck of cattle—where the loose hanging flesh may touch the ground and lap the dew as the animal feeds on the grass.

51. **Aunt**—Here used for 'old woman.' It is said that in America and also in Cornwall the terms 'uncle' and 'aunt' are still specially used of 'good-natured old people.' It is characteristic of this aunt that she is very wise, and that the tales with which she entertains her friends are very sad or pathetic. Probably she is sketched as a contrast to the festive and unamiable gossip. Puck makes fun of both alike.

52. **Three-foot stool**—A small, low, round stool. Puck would have assumed a somewhat similar shape. Three-footed stools are either circular or semi-circular.

53. **Topples**—Tumbles, falls over. Used properly of being overturned because top-heavy.

54. **'Tailor' cries**—The meaning of this ejaculation is unknown. Some think the word was a familiar one of reproach; from an earlier form *taylard*. Johnson referred it to the attitude of a tailor squatted at work; others to a possible rent made in the garments. Others again derive it from tail (as 'header' from head).

Falls into a cough—Apparently an instinctive method of endeavouring to conceal discomfiture. 'Cough' is an imitative word from the Dutch which replaced the Old Eng. *hwostan*.

55. **Quire**—Company of listeners. Properly the word means a troop of singers; the same as choir. O.F. *choeur* from Lat. *chorus*, from the Greek.

Hold their hips—Place their hands on their sides, not to 'split' with laughter. So Milton paints Laughter as "holding both his sides" (*L'Allegro*, 32).

Laugh—Must have been pronounced to rhyme with cough. The words are written coffe, loffe, in the early editions. Originally in these words the final consonant was a guttural. The vowel was something between o and u.

56. **Waxen**—Apparently some imitative provincial form. It has been suggested that it is a misprint of *yexen* or *yoxen*, an old word meaning to hiccough.

Neeze—An alternative form of 'sneeze.' The Old Eng. form was fneeze (root base *fnus*). The spelling as in the text is in Middle English, also in Dutch and Scandinavian (root form *hnus*). Neeze then is not derived from sneeze, but represents an older hneeze. Sneeze is a corruption of *fneeze*.

57. **Wasted**—Spent. A playful use of the word. The incongruity of a sad story and a merry hour does not affect

Puck. Cf. in Milton's Sonnet to Lawrence, 'help waste a sullen night.'

58. **Room**—Make way, keep back, give space. To make up for the wanting syllable, some have suggested *roomer*, a nautical word used of changing one's course. If the idea is of movement away we should prefer to read 'roam;' but the intention is probably similar to that of 'stand close' in III. ii. 41. Whether a syllable has been lost cannot be determined. The insertions 'make' and 'now' are unsatisfactory.

59. The Fairy at the same moment observes her own superior approaching, and is alarmed at the prospect of another domestic squaring. **Would that** =I greatly wish that Oberon were away.

60. **Ill met**—The salutation of one in bad humour, instead of 'well met' which was the ordinary phrase.

Titania—Shakespeare here dignifies with a classical name derived from 'Titan' and applied in *Ovid* to Diana) this queen of Teutonic fairy mythology.

61. **What, jealous Oberon**... Equivalent to: Who is this? Oh it is Oberon the jealous king. My fairy attendants move onward. For I have abandoned his society, and will not stay.

Fairy skip—Most editors accept Theobald's emendation 'Fairies skip.' It seems to us that the original text is right and that Titania is addressing the Fairy who has been talking with Puck and who seems to go in front of her; not her train who follow after her. That fairy is not heard of again. This simple explanation, however, seems to have occurred to no one. 'Skip' is appropriate to one who moves "over park, over pale, thorough flood, thorough fire." It is possible that 'fairie skip' is a misreading of 'fairies trip.'

62. **Company**—Society, with a leading reference to the root meaning, as in the phrase 'bed and board' or in Latin legal phraseology *a mensa et toro*.

63. **Rash wanton**—Referring to her love for the changeling boy.

Thy lord—Thy husband (with authority over you).

64. **Thy lady**—Thy lady-love. Titania refers to obligation on the other side. Oberon if her lord is bound to love her only.

65. **When**—The occasions when.

Hast stolen away—Crept secretly away. The reading of the folios is 'wast,' not hast, which is doubtless correct. An occasion, not a habit, is described.

66. **In**.....**Corin**—Like Corydon of old; as a lover. Corydon (whose name is thus contracted) is a love-sick shepherd of pastoral poetry: first sketched by Virgil in his *Eclogues*.

67. **Playing**.. .. According to the poetic descriptions in pastoral poetry. **Pipes of corn**, i.e., made of the straw or stalk of oats. This is part of the machinery of pastoral poetry. Corn is the available material for musical shepherds. Chaucer has "pipes made of green corn." Shakespeare has again 'oaten straws' (*Love's Lab. Lost*, V. ii. 193). Milton has in *Lycidas* oaten flute, and in *Comus* 345: Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops

Versing love—Singing (and, probably, at the same time composing) love-verses. A recognised sign of being deeply in love.

Both verse and prose are sometimes used as veils.

68. **Amorous Phillida**—The epithet expresses Titania's jealousy of her supposed rival. Phillida is the Gr. Acc. form. The name in *Virgil* is Phyllis, and it was used conventionally as Corin or Corydon was. Milton has 'the neat-handed Phyllis' (*L'Allegro*, 86).

Why art.. .. Another accusation.

69. **Come**—Arrived; the pp.

Indian steep—Steepe is the reading of the folios. The first quarto has steppe, but there is no reference to the Russian steppe which was unknown in England before the eighteenth century. Milton also has 'Indian steep' (*Comus*, 139). The phrase means the 'far east,' and probably refers to the mountain ranges in the north-west of India. Somewhere in the distant region vaguely named India the fairies were believed to have their real home.

70. **But that forsooth**—Except that to be sure. Forsooth = on sooth, *i.e.*, in truth.

Bouncing—Describes the heavy awkward manner of a big countrywoman. So Hippolyta appears to the delicate and jealous Titania.

Amazon—Hippolyta, who was one of the Amazons. The Amazons were a tribe of female warriors who belonged to some regions of Asia Minor. Early Greek poetry has many references to these heroines of a remote past. They were a republic of women, and highly skilled in all military exercises.

71. **Buskined**—Wearing buskins, as huntsmen wore. On the stage the buskin (a boot extending to the knee) was the badge of the tragedian, as the sock was of the comedian.

Mistress—Sweetheart, without any bad association such as the word bears now. Poets of the Elizabethan time (down to Cowley whose love poems were addressed *to his Mistress*) use this term of the lady (often an imaginary person) whom they professed to love.

Warrior love—The phrase simply repeats the idea of the preceding one. Both 'buskined' and 'warrior' imply a masculine type of woman.

72. **Must be**—Is to be.

73. **To give**—Cf. Oberon's speech at the end of the play.

74. **How canst**.....How is it that a sense of shame does not restrain you from.

75. **Glance at**—Cast reflection on; make oblique suggestion against: distinguished from open direct accusation. Similarly 'glance' is used of a weapon or dart just touching, or moving along the surface of. The word is from the Scandinavian.

Credit with—The esteem in which I am held by.

76. **Knowing** . . Seeing you know that.. This is why shame should have restrained her. These mutual accusations give a very comic idea of fairy land.

77. **Through**.....**night**—Two meanings are possible; either through the star-lit night, or, through the night in which as a streak of light she guided him. 'Glimmer' is used of a faint and usually a flickering light, and sometimes (as in Rogers' 'glimmers like a meteor,' said of human life) of a transient light indistinct from the quickness of its movement. In the poets it is frequently used of twilight. Thus in *Macbeth*, III. iii. 5, "the west yet glimmers with some streaks of day" where the lingering light of the dying day, and at the same time the streaked or dappled sky, are described. So Milton has 'glimmering shades and bowers' referring probably to twilight (*Il Pen.* 27) and in *Par. Lost*, II. x. 37, glimmering dawn; III. 429 'glimmering air.' The term occurs again twice in this play; in V. i. 376 where it seems to describe the light of a dying fire, but may possibly refer to light made by the fairies, and III. ii. 61 where it describes, in contrast with the brightness of the planet Venus, the dimness of the sphere in which it revolves. There also the glimmering may be due to the star-light generally or may be the effect over the sky of the one bright planet, or it may be a description of the twilight in which that planet is shining.

78. **Perigenia**—There is a story in Plutarch of a maiden Perigouna, whose father Sinnis Theseus slew, and whom he took possession of. She bore him a son. Shakespeare has apparently modified this name. The accent is on the third syllable.

79. **And make**.....And (didst thou not) cause him.....to break.

Ægle—This spelling, introduced by Rowe and since follow-

ed, is an emendation of the original Eagles; *i.e.*, it is a restoration of Greek form. Ea was a very frequent English diphthong, and was sounded in nearly the same way as the Lat. ae. or Gr. ai. Shakespeare added a final s, as in North. Ægle is described in Plutarch as a nymph, the daughter of Panopeus.

Break .. ..**Ariadne**—According to this story, Theseus (on account of Ægle) deserted Ariadne, whereupon (as some said) Ariadne hung herself for sorrow.

80. **Antiopa**—She was an Amazon. According to one account Theseus received her from Hercules; according to another account he enticed her on board his ship and then suddenly sailed off. It was to avenge the abduction of Antiopa that the Amazons led by Hippolyta invaded Attica, and thus afforded Theseus the opportunity of obtaining another of their queens Apparently Oberon says that for the sake of Ægle Theseus deserted Antiopa also. It will be noted that the fault of Titania lay in countenancing and aiding amours; as Greek goddesses also were often pleased to do.

81. **Forgeries**—Fabrications, which is etymologically the same word.

82. **Never**... .**met**—Not once . have we met.

Middle summer's spring—The beginning of mid-summer; the first of the season. Or perhaps 'middle' simply means that summer is the middle part of the year, in which case the meaning is simply, the beginning of summer. Titania complains that, during the whole season of their out-door sports, Oberon has been troublesome.

83. With verses 83—85 cf. 28-29 above. **Mead** = Meadow.

84. **Paved fountain**—When the bed (or edge) is covered over with pebbles. In a running stream these pebbles are smoothed and rounded by the action of the water, and in the resort of the fairies they are doubtless of white or bright colour. The word pave is through the Fr. from the Latin *pavire* (or folk Lat. *pavare*), to beat or tread down. Marlowe has pebble-paved; Drayton pearl-paved. Milton has coral-paven of the Severn (*Comus* 886) and star-paved of the milky way (*P. L.*, IV.) All these references, except the last, are to the beds or channels of rivers.

Rushy brook.—Small stream on whose banks rushes grow; a contrast to the stony ground indicated in the preceding phrase. Rushes are a kind of long grass to be found in wet ground.

85. **In the beached margent**—On the beach. Perhaps 'beach' suggested to Shakespeare the idea of the slope so that

'beached' may mean 'sloping.' Or it may have meant embankment which, however, is not consistent with the preposition, in. The etymology of the word is obscure. **Margent** is a form of margin once in frequent use. Milton has it in *Comus*, 232. The form 'marge' was also used (Lat. *margo*). The frequent addition of a *t* or *d* after *n* was due to the weak sound of the nasal semi-consonant. The voice rested more easily on the combinations *nt*, *nd*. So also with *m* and *l*.

86. **Ringlets**—Little rings or circles of fairy dances. There is no reference to the 'orbs' of grass referred to l. 9. Mr. Furness understands the word of the "gossamer ringlets" of hair that waved in the wind as the fairies sported. The verb 'dance' is naturally followed by a substantive indicating the kind of dance (as dance a reel, a jig, &c.) Thus ringlets would naturally stand for round or circular dances; and 'dance our ringlets'=dance forming our circles. Dance our hair is scarcely a possible expression, though we speak of hair dancing.

Whistling wind—The wind supplied the music to which they danced.

87. **But with thy brawls thou hast**—That thou has not with The word 'brawl' is another indication of the noisiness of Oberon's quarrelling (Welsh *brawl*).

88. **Therefore**—This is the first consequence, the beginning of evils. Note that there is a chain of consequences, each depending on the preceding.

Piping—Making music. A pipe is a tube-shaped wind instrument; supposed to be an imitative word from the cry of young birds. Thus suitable for the sound of the wind making music

In vain—Without proper response. Cf. *Mat.* XI. 17. we have piped unto you and ye have not danced.

89. **As**—As if.

90. **Contagious fogs**—Pestilential fogs. Fogs are supposed to bring diseases and to injure crops. It is believed that Shakespeare is here referring to the bad weather of the year 1594.

In the land—The fogs are raised from the sea, but are carried above the land on which they fall in rain.

91. **Have**—Grammatical correction of *hath* of the early editions.

Pelting river—This is the reading of the quartos; the folios have *petty*. The latter shows the sense. 'Pelting' is a word frequently used of rain falling heavily, but not of rivers in any sense. Moreover it is not likely that Titania would use

a proleptic epithet. But there seems to have been another word 'pelting' now obsolete which meant petty; perhaps akin to paltry. Shakespeare uses it elsewhere.

Proud—A classical epithet of a swollen river, as in *Paradise Regained*, III. 334, "or overlay with bridges rivers proud, as with a yoke."

Overborne their continents—Overflowed (or transgressed) their banks. 'Continent' is what contains or confines.

92. **The ox** .The crops have been destroyed. This is the second stage of evils.

Therefore—In consequence of the bad weather.

93. **Lost his sweat**—Lost the fruits of his hard toil.

94. **Rotted ere his youth** The corn laid by the heavy rain, and unable to rise, has rotted on the ground while still green and before grain was formed. 'His' was the old neut as well as masc. genitive. The form 'its' was not yet in use. The words that follow are, however, of the nature of Paronomasia or Epigram, since they are more applicable to man than to corn.

Beard—The prickly spines resembling a beard that grow on certain kinds of grain Mr. Furness says the reference is, of course, to wheat, but it is fully as applicable to bere or barley. Burns has 'bearded bear' (*i.e.*, bere).

95. **Fold**—Sheep-fold, enclosure for sheep; often uncovered.

Empty in the drowned field—The field is so flooded that the sheep have had to be removed to some higher ground. 'Drown' which is from 'drink' was sometimes used in the sense of the kindred word 'drench.'

91. **Fatted**—Fattened. So fatted calf (*Luke*, XV. 23).

Murrain flock—The sheep dying of disease due to the floods. The original spelling is murrion. In *Exodus*, IX. 3, it is used of a disease affecting sheep, cattle, asses, horses and camels. Shakespeare here uses the subst. as an adj. It is derived through Old Fr. from Lat. *mori*, to die.

97. **Nine men's morris**—A peculiar game, but here used of the ground on which it is played. By the cutting of the turf, a sort of chess-board was formed. The word 'men' is used as in draughts. The game was played by two persons Instead of 'morris' there was a more correct form *merrils* derived from the Fr. *merelles* or *mereaux* which was the name of the counters or men. The form morris is, perhaps, modified from *morals*, a corruption of merelles. In this game the ground was cut into a large square within which were smaller (concentric) squares. Diagonals were marked and the middle points of the sides joined. In the corners or angular points

the *men* were placed and moved along the lines. The object (as in draughts) was to win all the men belonging to the other side. Each point was gained when three men were placed in a straight line. Whosoever succeeded in doing so was allowed to carry off any one of the men of his opponent.

It is supposed that Shakespeare was familiar with this game in his youth, as it was played in Warwickshire. The cut turf would naturally hold water or mud. It is fairy grotesqueness to place this injury to the ground alongside of the death of cattle. But sport was the life of fairies.

99. **Quaint mazes**—Labyrinthine figures traced on the turf by boys in sport. The running of the figure eight was one of these games; but there were others more intricate. In the wet weather the play had ceased, and the marks (being effaced or overgrown) had ceased to be visible. 'Quaint' is applied to what is at once odd and interesting. O.F. *coint* correctly derived from Lat. *cognitus*, known, but modified in meaning from confusion with *comptus*, adorned.

Wanton—An epithet once frequently applied to objects in Nature. See below, line 129. So often in Milton as 'wanton growth' (*P.L.*, IV. 629; IX. 211), Browne's pastorals, &c. The root idea is 'unrestrained;' and the meaning is nearly the same as of 'natural,' *i.e.*, not artificially stimulated. It is possible that here the epithet is by Hypallage transferred from the boys.

100. **Undistinguishable**—*i.e.*, from the rest of the green; imperceptible, or not noticeable.

101. **The human mortals**—The Fairy Queen's description of mankind. 'Human' is in contrast to the lower animals above specified.

Winter cheer—Food stored up for the winter; or, as others explain, games and festivities. But as the early editions have *heere*, the true reading is uncertain.

102. **No night**.. ...There is no mirth or festivity. Unhappiness prevails.

Hymn or carol—These terms, and also the verb 'blest,' indicate religious songs. The word carol (from the Celtic through the Fr. and originally meaning a kind of dance) was specially used of spirited Christmas melodies. The Greek *humnos* (whence hymn) also meant a festive song addressed to some divinity. The reference here is to hymns chanted or songs sung in honour of Diana or the Moon. Milton has "blest song" (*Comus*, 268) referring to incantations which kept off the pestilential fogs.

103. **Therefore**—In consequence of the withholding of

due worship, whereby her Majesty (the Moon) is dishonoured and offended. The *therefore's* introduce clauses and causes dependent on each other and ultimately on Oberon's wrath. Here we have the third stage of evils.

Governess of floods—Referring to the influence of the Moon in producing the tides (cf. *Hamlet*, I. i. 119, "Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands)" and, in the present application, to cloud and damp and moisture in her sublunary dominions.

104. **Pale** .. ..**anger**—Not silvery bright as in clear weather, but dim as seen through mist and fog.

Washes .. ..**air**—Fills the air with cloud and vapour. The Moon as occupying the lowest of the spheres had easiest access to the air beneath her.

105. **Rheumatic diseases**—Including catarrhs and colds as well as rheumatism. The Gr. *rheuma* meant flow or flux. 'Rheum' was regarded as one of the humours of the body (along with blood, bile, &c.) and thus was responsible for a group of diseases or affections. Note that Shakespeare accents the adjective on the first syllable.

106. **Thorough this distemperature**—This phrase supplies the place of the 'therefore' of lines 88, 93, 103, and thus marks a fourth stage of evils. It means either, through this anger, or, in the midst of these diseases.

It is necessary to read thorough (as in the first quarto and second folio) unless the middle syllable of distemperature be accented—which is very unlikely. The 'through' of the second quarto and first folio may have been a misprint. 'Distemperature' means mental disturbance, misgovernment, loss of self-control. It might possibly refer, as we suppose, not to the quarrel (in which Titania would bear a part), but to the mind and conduct of Oberon which produced the brawls and from which all evils are supposed to flow; (but see 116-7). Or it may much more probably be applied to the anger of the Moon; but not to the state of the weather. And this application to the Moon would be practically certain if the confusion of the seasons (107—114) was supposed to be wrought by the agency of that planet.

Another view seems to us possible. Distemperature may be used for state of distemper, which was an ordinary word for disease; and 'thorough' may mean in the midst of, in the course of. The Moon's anger has been followed by diseases; and these are followed or accompanied by reversal of seasons. But this last result is due to the combination of causes rather than to the one last specified.

107. **Alter**—The infinitive; intransitive. The meaning is, exchange qualities.

Hoary-headed frosts—In winter (and end of autumn) the ground is often covered with hoar frost, due to congelation, when there has been no fall of snow. There is also a reading *hoared*, given in the second quarto and first two folios.

108. **Fall in**..... The petals of the red rose are covered and white (or hoar) with the frost. 'Fall' is scientifically false both of hoar and dew. 'Fresh' is the opposite of frosty (as it is applied to weather) and is used here to enhance the effect by contrast. Lap (or bosom) we take to refer to the leaves or petals, not the calix; or to the upper centre of the rose. The epithet 'crimson' is chosen to describe the brilliant red of the favourite rose.

The meaning is that winter has appeared in mid-summer. The line may be studied as an example of the fine rhythmical effects that can be produced by transposition of stresses.

109. Conversely, summer appears in mid-winter.

Old Hiems'—Winter personified; conceived as an old man. Lat. *hiems*. An emendation suggested by Tyrwhit and adopted by most editors is 'thin' instead of 'chin' of the quartos and folios. 'Thin' means covered with thin hair. The editors think a chaplet on the chin grotesque, but the meaning seems to be that Winter instead of having a beard of icicles has a beard of fragrant flowers, or a garland round the neck which falls as a beard on the breast.

Icy crown—Bald head or white-haired head. Probably in the conception icicles take the place of hair.

110. **Odorous chaplet**..... A garland of fragrant flowers..... A chaplet is a wreath, or circlet of flowers; and though used mainly of the head, it is equally suitable of the neck. The word is derived, not from *caput*, the head, but from Low Lat. *capa* or *cappa*, whence cape (for the shoulders) and cap. Milton has "odorous sweets."

111. **As in mockery**—The flowers of summer on the head of winter, or the emblems of youth placed on old age, strike the observer as incongruous and mocking.

112. **Childing**—Teeming, fruit-bearing. The term is said to have been technically used in Botany when one flower grew out of another. Hence Holt White explained the term of autumn's unseasonably producing flowers on those of summer. Probably the simpler meaning of fruit-ripening or fruit-producing is correct. In Southey's line—many a childing mother died—the meaning is, many died in child-birth. Shakespeare in Sonnet 97 has—

The teeming autumn big with rich increase
Bearing the wanton burthen of her prime.

113. **Wonted liveries**—Usual dress. The metaphorical application of 'livery' to the garb of nature was frequent. So *Milton*: the clouds in thousand liveries dight, *L'Allegro*, 62, and again *P.L.*, IV. 599, "twilight gray had in her sober livery all things clad."

Mazed world—Mankind perplexed (or amazed). The mental meaning of maze is the original one; that of a labyrinth is secondary.

114. **Increase**—The fruits of the seasons. This was an ordinary meaning of the word. As in *Psalm* LXVII. 6: then shall the earth yield her increase. Cf. 'Earth's increase' *Ven. and Ad.* 24; and first line of first Sonnet.

Knows not which is which.. .. .Cannot distinguish one season from another. Seasons are distinguished by their produce (including 'liveries,' and increase'), but these are now interchanged, and men are puzzled.

115. **Progeny of evils**—Families of evils, including successive generations: Cf. l. 117.

116. **Debate .. ..dissension**—Both words mean 'quarrel.' The use of debate for friendly discussion is modern. It is from the same root as 'battle' (Low Lat. *batere*). Dissension is a slightly milder term expressing difference of opinion, sentiment or feeling such as leads to separation.

Note that 'comes' is the last word of l. 115 (not as in some editions the first of 116), and that dissension according to the correct pronunciation of the time is a quadri-syllable.

117. **Parents**—The same metaphor as in 'progeny.' In these closing lines Titania seems to take her share of the blame. This may be done to appease and mollify her lord; or she may regard her part as unavoidable and blameless.

Original—The same as origin. So in Bacon. Cf. in the Elizabethan time the identity of orient and oriental, &c. The line may be compared with the classical *fons et origo malorum.*

Do you—Imperative mood.

It lies in you—It rests with you; it is in your power. A recognised phrase. Cf. *Rom.* XII. 18.

119. **Cross her**—Thwart her own dear.

120. **Do but beg**—Only ask.

121. **Henchman**—Chief attendant, servant closely depended on. This old word Skeat derives from *hengest*, horse, as if it originally meant groom.

122. **The fairy land**—The same as thy fairy kingdom (l. 144). Collier, following the old MS., reads 'thy' here also.

Buys not—Will not or cannot buy. Titania means that she will not be tempted to give up the boy for all that the fairy king possesses.

123. **Votress**—Devotee, one vowed to the service of another. (Lat. *votum*, whence O.Fr. *vou.*, Eng. vow). Another spelling generally, but, as we think, unnecessarily adopted is votaress. The *a* was inserted by Dyce, but the word must be pronounced as a dissyllable. The masc. form votarist (with Greek suffix) is both in Shakespeare and in Milton (*Comus*, 189). Both seem formed from voter. The suffix -ess is Fr. (Lat. *-essa*). The modern subst. is votary.

My order—As used especially in the Catholic Church: as the order of S. John or of any other saint. It may be noted that Titania's order did not require virginity. The term order is also used in a secular sense, as the order of the Indian Empire and of knighthood generally, but 'votress' has a religious signification). Note here a double ending.

124. **Spiced Indian air**—Shakespeare was probably thinking of Araby the blest, the name India having included Persia, Arabia and other regions west of India proper. But the entire East was supposed to abound in spices. Cf. *Par. Lost*, IV. 162, "Sabean odours from the spicy shore of Araby the blest"; and the words of Heber's hymn:—

> What though the spicy breezes,
> Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle.

Shakespeare, partly, perhaps, because the fairies dont belong to Greek literature, associates them with the imaginative East.

125. **Full**—An adv. So in Sonnet 33:—

> Full many a glorious morning have I seen,
> Flatter the mountain-tops.

Gossiped—Talked. See on 1. 47. No vulgarity is intended here.

126. **Neptune's yellow sands**—Sea-side, a favourite resort of fairies. Cf. line 95. Neptune (Gr. *Poseidon*) was the god and owner of the sea, as Jupiter of the upper air and Hades of the under-world. They were brothers; sons of Kronos and Rhea. The earth was their common possession. See Milton's *Comus*, 18—23.

127. **Traders**—Merchant-vessels. England's trade with the East began in the reign of Elizabeth.

On the flood—The construction 'embarked traders on,' instead of traders embarked on, is frequent in Shakespeare. It gives a fuller force both participial and adjectival to em-

barked. Flood (from 'flow') was poetically used of sea or river in their normal state. Cf. line 5.

128. **When**.. The fanciful fairies are easily amused.

129. **Wanton**—See on line 99. There is no ethical idea.

130. **Swimming**—The term is still used conversationally of a certain dignified and easy manner of walking in which the body is moved as if from side to side and the arms are waved alternately. In the present case the manner was enhanced by the pregnancy.

Gait—Style of walking. A modern spelling, indicating a particular application of the word 'gate,' a way. The spelling 'gait' is convenient, though its insertion here, from Capell onwards, was probably due to ignorance. The word is from the Scandinavian—the Anglo-Sax. *gate* (written *geat*) having meant an opening. See V. i. 401.

131. **Following**—Copying, looking to, taking example from.

Rich—Having a precious possession.

132. **Would**—Was wont to. **Imitate**, as distinguished from follow, describes the result.

Sail upon—She with her swimming tread reproduced the figure and motion of the sailing vessel. It is to be remembered that there were no steamers in those days, and that a ship at sea seemed a vast array of sails moving up and down or to either side as it ploughed and crossed the waves Metaphor

133. **To fetch**.. This was the work of Titania's votress. Trifles or toys were great things to the Fairy Queen.

134. **As from**—The comparison to the Vessel is kept up.

Voyage—It is difficult to say how this word was pronounced. The Mid. Eng. form was *viage*: O.Fr. *veiage* (Lat. *via*).

Merchandise—The goods brought home by the trading vessel (Fr. *marchandise*; Lat. *mercari, mercem, merere*. In the comparison the reference may be to the pregnancy (as in l. 131), or the load of trifles, or both.

135. **Of that boy**—In child-birth.

136. **Rear up**—Rear: bring up. 'Rear' is a causative of rise, as is also 'raise.'

137. **And for the sake**—This phrase is repeated for emphasis, according to a mannerism of poets.

138. **Intend you stay?**—Do you intend to stay.

139. **Perchance**.. ...Above she had taunted Oberon with interest in the marriage (line 72). She too is to celebrate the occasion.

140. **Patiently**—Without brawling.

Dance in our round—Their most important task. 'Round' was a technical name for a dance with circular movement; similar to what is called a country-dance.

Cf. *Comus*, 143-44—

> Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
> In a light fantastic round.

141. **See.....revels**—Understand 'patiently.' 'Revels' includes their entire sport, the music, dancing and other festivities of the fairies.

142. **Spare**—Keep clear of.

143. Oberon cannot abandon his desire. He is trying just now to obtain it by smooth speech.

144. **Fairy Kingdom**—Thy whole world; all that pertains to thee as King of fairy land.

In this line the second syllable of 'Kingdom' is extra-metrical. Such additional syllables were legitimate either at the end of the line or in the middle if there was a pause. (There are six examples of the latter in *Comus* but none in *Paradise Lost*). Here the variation accords with the high and mighty tone in which the queen vents her indignation.

Away—Let us away. She is now addressing her own train.

145. **Chide down right**—Quarrel right out (*i.e.*, fiercely). In older English 'chide' had the force of 'brawl.'

146. **Shall not from**—Shall not (escape, or depart) from. This elliptical construction is frequent even in modern English. A verbal force is given to the prepositious out, from, at, &c.

147. **Till I**.....Till I shall have severely punished thee for this wrong done to me. 'Torment' is from the substantive, which meant an instrument of torture. 'Injury' was applied to wrong treatment of any kind, in word or deed.

148. **Gentle**—Even the King deigns to flatter Puck, when desiring his service.

Remembrest—So spelt in Shakespeare. In this line either 'hither' is a dissyllable, and there is a double ending; or the accent of the last word is changed, so as to fall on the first and final syllables.

149. **Since once**—Thy memory goes back to the time when. Mr. Verity rightly explains 'since' as equivalent to 'ever since.' Once = once upon a time.

In the speech that follows Delius, a German critic, finds an illustration of the epic element in Shakespeare. That is to say, the poet is stating in narrative form what he cannot scenically represent. Oberon, Titania, Puck have all repre-

sented their cases in person; but the promontory, the Vestal, Cupid, the flower cannot well be represented, and Shakespeare must fall back on his poetic powers to make the scene real to, and impress it on the minds of, the spectators. Delius attributes this necessity to the insufficient equipment of the Elizabethan day. This seems to us improbable. Many things as wonderful as this bolt by Cupid were rudely represented at the time. But what could not be directly represented was a thing that had to happen *years* before.

150. **Mermaid**—Sea-maiden; a creature of Norse mythology, the upper part of which resembles a woman. The first syllable is *mere* a lake.

On a dolphin's back—Usually singing mermaids sit on the rocks. For the present instance Oberon is on the rocks and the mermaid is out at sea. However a dolphin (charmed doubtless by her music) has provided for her a seat. The dolphin (O.F. *daulphin*, Lat. *delphinus*, Gr. *delphis*) is a kind of fish, familiar in Indian waters. The suggestion is due to the story of Arion, a Greek poet and musician, who when he plunged into the sea (sailing between Sicily and Corinth and in danger of his life from the sailors) was, according to a legend, saved by the dolphins whom he had charmed. It is supposed that Shakespeare had seen representations to this effect. It was a characteristic feature of the Masques of the time to represent such preter-natural scenes. And it is known that in a performance given in honour of Elizabeth by Leicester at Kenilworth in 1575, Arion on a dolphin, and a mermaid calming the waters, were exhibited. The same thing may have been acted frequently and may have touched the youthful poet's imagination.

The allegorical application of this passage to Mary, Queen of Scots, who was wife of the French Dauphin, seems rather far-fetched, especially as on this theory, lines 152 and 153 must refer to different points of time. Still it is not impossible and the play on the word 'dolphin' may be an example of the old false wit.

151. **Dulcet and harmonious breath**—Sweet and melodious song. Breath is what constitutes voice, and is, therefore the material of vocal music. Dulcet is from Lat. *dulcis* (through O.F. *doucet*). Harmonious means in perfect concord nothing out of tune (or ill-fitting).

152. **That the rude sea**.....Rude and civil (cf. civilised are exact opposites. Primarily they are used of man; here they mean rough and calm. So in BACON, *Essays* 17, civil is used in the sense of 'tranquil.' Such effects are, in th

ancient poets, frequently attributed to exquisite music. In Shakespeare's time, when classical ideas were in the air, it was customary to connect the mermaids of the North with the sirens of the South of Europe. The latter bewitched mariners with the magic of their music. Milton says (*Comus*, 256—8) of the songs of Circe and the sirens three :—

> Who as they sung would take the prisoned soul
> And lap it in Elysium; Scylla wept,
> And chid her barking waves into attention;
> And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause.

So in our century when mythology is dead Byron can still compare a sweet voice to music on the waters—

> When as if its sound were causing
> The charmed ocean's pausing,
> The waves lie still and gleaming,
> And the lulled winds seem dreaming.

The allegorists apply this line to the pacifying effects in Scotland of Mary's return from France.

153 **And certain stars**.. . The fixed stars were regarded as being all in one 'sphere,' but the term 'star' was applied to the planets also. The suggestion here is probably due to meteors (falling stars) or comets. In Marlowe's *Faustus* the Moon is brought down: and there was supposed to be no limit in such respects to the power of magic. 'Certain' possibly means—fixed, but without scientific exactness. '**Madly**' is a strong assertion of erratic movement. Milton in the passage quoted above goes on to say that the sirens "on sweet madness robbed" the sense of itself (line 261). One may recall Wordsworth's lines to Duty—

> Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong.
> And the most ancient heavens by thee are fresh and strong.

According to the allegorical interpretation the 'stars' were certain English nobles who were captivated by the Queen of Scots; in which case 'certain' means 'some.'

155. **That very time**.....Here begins Oberon's vision, interpreted by some critics as an allegory of Elizabeth and Leicester.

But thou couldst not.—Being not sufficiently ethereal.

156. **Flying between**...Descending from the abode of the gods, perhaps Mt. Olympus (as in the Greek system). **Cold**, as applied to the actual moon, is to be understood of contrast to the heat of the sun; as applied to the moon-goddess (Diana), it means passionless, chaste. Cf. 'chaste as an icicle'

157. **All armed**—With bow and quiver—not with the armour of a warrior knight, but with Cupid's own full equipment.

Certain, sure, correct.

158. **At a fair vestal throned**...This virgin queen is clearly Elizabeth. The vestal virgins were the priestesses of Vesta, a goddess of fire and purity (whose sacred fire they kept ever burning). It was necessary to flatter Elizabeth as 'fair' to the end (though if this were an allegory of the year 1575, Elizabeth was at the time comparatively young and beautiful). "In the West" (*i.e.*, of Europe) was a familiar description of the situation of Great Britain; cf.

This silver star set in the Western sea.

Here it may be remembered that the scene is in Athens in the South-east of Europe.

Throned = Enthroned.

159. **And loosed**...vigorously shot his arrow. 'Loosed' was a familiar term in archery; = let go.

160. **As it should.**—With such force as if it were to (or had to) pierce.

A hundred thousand.—This (if anything in the tales of gods is of such a nature) may be reckoned a Hyperbole. The poet is emphasising the earnestness or determination of Cupid.

161. **Might**—Was able to; (according to the root idea of **may**, might).

Fiery.—In keeping with the thought and figure of next line. Cupid's shaft was gold-tipped.

162. **Quenched.**—Its fire extinguished. Shakespeare may have had in mind *Ephesians*. VI. 16: taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked (one).

Chaste beams, white light. See on l. 156. Referring to Elizabeth it imputes to her a radiating influence that kept frivolity far off.

Watery—The epithet is convenient for the quenching of the fire; but it had not in Shakespeare's time the weak or semi-contemptuous meaning it bears now. Cf. above (l. 104) the Moon's 'washing the air'; and also III. i. 192. In *Hamlet* she is called the 'moist star.'

163. **Imperial**—An epithet as fine as the corresponding title Emperor is coarse. It is expressive of Empire, but still more of grace and dignity. Tennyson says of Guinevere, O imperial-moulded form.

Votress passed—Both dissyllables. The insertion of the vowel *a* in the former is again gratuitous.

164. **Maiden meditation**—This fine phrase, like the next, owes its form to its alliterativeness. It means, with the thought and sentiment of a virgin.

Fancy-free.—This defines the former phrase; it means untouched by love; free from fancy. Cf. in form, scot-free. With the thought cf. Milton's description of Diana as setting "at nought the frivolous bolt of Cupid," *Comus* 445. For Fancy see I. i. 32.

165. **Marked I**—I carefully noticed. The inversion of subject and predicate is frequently found where there is a change in the argument.

Bolt—The arrow with its fire quenched. Originally a round iron pin. The term is used chiefly of Jupiter's thunder-bolts. Catapult is supposed to contain the same word.

166. **Little western flower**—A familiar English flower, the pansy, as explained in line 168. The allegorists refer this to the lady with whom Leicester was carrying on an intrigue at the time when he made the unsuccessful overtures to Elizabeth. This is possible, but it does not improve the allegory.

167. **Before** .....Formerly white but thereafter purple (*i.e.*, blood-red). Milk-white was a familiar compound, used by Dryden in the first line of his *Hind and Panther*. 'White' is emblematic of purity.

Now purple with love's wound—Various indications may be given of the origin of this idea. Mr. Furness quotes from a writer of 1578 that there were four kinds of the viola, "a third kind bearing flowers white as snow; and a fourth kind (but not very common) whose flowers are of a dark crimson, or old reddish purple colour." Shakespeare may thus have based his transformation on the facts of physical variety. Hunter points out that Ovid's story of Pyramus (which Shakespeare must have read) tells of the change to purple of the mulberry tree, stained with his blood. Is there not also a recollection of the story of another flower, the hyacinth whose purple colour was due to blood similarly spilt? Somewhat different is the story of the stream (Adonis) which ran purple at a certain season every year on account of the wound inflicted by the boar on Adonis. 'Purple' in our older writers and still more in the classical poets is a somewhat vague designation of colour, embracing at least all shades from bright red to dark blue.

168. **Love-in-idleness**—One of many names given to the *viola tricolor*. Another name is 'heart's ease.' The ordinary name is pansy, which means 'thought.' The name here given

is meant to express the central idea of the Play, which is the caprice of love.

169. **Flower herb**—The flower is the bloom; the herb is the whole thing, including root and stalk and flower.

170. **Sleeping**.....Hypallage, for the eyelids of one sleeping.

171. **Or**.....**or**—Either.....or.

172. **Next live creature**—First living thing (man or animal). Next is a contraction of nighest. 'It' is used for 'he or she.'

173. **Be thou here**—Come back here, *i.e.*, go to England and return again to Athens.

174. **Ere**.....In a shorter time than a whale takes to go a (mile or) league. A league is three miles. But it is used above as an alternative of mile. Leviathan is a Biblical (Hebrew) word used of some large aquatic animal (*Job*, XLI. 1.) The name indicates twisting serpent-like movement.

175. **I'll put**.....Here Puck lets us know the swiftness with which he can dart through space. He can fly round the earth (nearly 25,000 miles) in forty minutes. He may therefore go to Britain and return in about five minutes. He will require a few seconds to find the flower.

Put a girdle round about—Apparently a familiar expression for going round, or circumnavigating. The girdle is the track made by the traveller. [Taken as a motto by Telegraph inventors.]

177. **Titania when she is**—When Titania is. Older syntax was less exact and more given to superfluous words than modern syntax. An instance of Antiptosis.

178. **Liquor**—Juice. Used originally of anything liquid though now appropriated to wines and spirits.

179. **When**—The reading of the first quarto is *then*; of the second quarto *whence* corrected to *when* in the folios. 'When' is obviously right. There is a slight inversion in the line. It should be read "when she waking looks upon the next thing." According to the reading 'then' there should be no 'it' in line 182.

181. **Meddling monkey, busy ape**—The two phrases are closely allied. 'Busy' is used in the sense of restless or meddlesome; as in Bacon's *Essays* 13 or *1 Peter*, IV. 15. Shakespeare often indulges in this slightly varying repetition (cf. I. 71). He similarly distinguishes between monkey and ape in *As You Like It*, IV. 1.

182. **Soul of love**—Love in its very essence, or uttermost possibility; absolute love. So 'soul of honour' is a frequent

expression for perfect honour. So in *Hamlet*, 'brevity is the soul of wit,' &c.

Another herb—Described as 'Dian's bud.' See IV 70—73. Notice the preparation for the 'resolution' of the plot.

185. **Her page**—The changeling boy. Page was an attendant of an honourable kind. Page, squire and knight were successive positions which a boy of good birth and abilities might expect to hold. Derived by Skeat from *pagus*, a village.

186. **Invisible**—I disappear from sight without leaving the place. Spirits were believed to be visible or invisible at pleasure. Oberon by remaining unseen can hear the conversation that follows and act upon it as he pleases. Probably such a sentence was necessary for the information of the spectators.

187. **Conference**—Conversation.

189. **Is**—Singular, as the two parties are recalled separately and successively. Elliptical for—where is Lysander and where is fair...

190. **The one**—The former, Lysander.

Stay—The original editions have stay, stayeth. The emendation 'slay' has been almost unanimously accepted since the time of Theobald, to whom it was suggested by Thirlby. Nevertheless such emendation (where the early editions are agreed) is undesirable. Nor does the context in any way require the 'killing' idea. Demetrius feels 'wood' or out of his wits, but by no means dying. The word 'stay' may have come into Shakespeare's mind as the opposite of 'pursue.' 'The one I'll stay' means I'll stop the elopement. 'The other stayeth me' may mean either, Lysander prevents the success of my wooing, or Hermia detains me searching for her here. There is something of a play on the word (as on 'wood' in line 192). Shakespeare is in a punning or playful mood. Note that 'stay' re-appears in line 235. Probably the word was in familiar use as a semi-legal term.

192. **Wode within this wood**—The spelling 'wode' is a modern alteration to mark the distinction of the words. The adjective 'wood' (Old and Middle English *wod*) means **mad**. The word is still used provincially. The change of spelling in the text conceals the fact that both words were pronounced by Shakespeare with the same vowel sound. The figure is Paronomasia or Epigram.

194. **Gone**—The past participle used as an adverb, = hence.

195. **Draw**—Attract as a magnet.

Hard-hearted adamant—Adamant is the original form of 'diamond.' Hence the first idea is what is expressed by the epithet. But in Shakespeare's time adamant was (originally on account of a false derivation) identified with the load-stone or magnet; hence the idea of 'drawing' is intended. Shakespeare probably intended both meanings. The figure is metaphor.

196. **Draw not iron**—*I.e.*, in drawing me. I am not iron (but steel). It is not a case of a magnet drawing iron where the effect is temporary, but of drawing steel which is at once magnetised and bears the influence for ever.

The editors are perplexed over this passage, and desire again to corrupt the text or to make Helena contradict herself.

197. **True as steel.**—This expression denoting faithfulness was and is proverbial, due perhaps to the fact that tempered steel retains its magnetism. Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, III. ii. 186—8—

> As true as steel, as plantage to the moon,
> As sun to day, as turtle to her mate,
> As iron to adamant, as earth to the centre.

Except in this phrase the figurative meaning of steel is hardness.

Leave you...Cease to be a magnet.

199. **Do I** ..These direct interrogations are a strong way of asserting the negative.

Speak you fair.—Pay you addresses, compliment you. 'Speak fair' is a familiar expression, not necessarily of love, but of any endeavour to win favour. Milton has in his Nativity hymn (referring to Nature): Only with speeches fair she woos the gentle air.

201. **Nor**—In Modern English, and. The double negative was a characteristic of Old English and continued till after the time of Shakespeare.

202. **Even**—A monosyllable here, and usually, the liquid *n* being closely united with the *v*. (So in seven, heaven, driven, &c.)

203. **Spaniel.**—A kind of dog, proverbially true to its master even to obsequiousness, as described in the following lines; meaning Spanish dog, derived through O.F. from the Spanish (*Espanol, Espana*, Lat. *Hispania*).

204. **The more**—In proportion as. See above.

Fawn—Court the favour of by a cringing or parasitic manner. Fawn, originally denoted the young of any animal; now used only of deer.

205. **Spurn**—Perhaps in the original sense of kick. Akin to spur.

206. **Lose**—The first quarto has loose. The modern 'lose' corresponds in meaning to the Middle English *lesen*, Old English *leosan*. There was also a Middle English *losien* (Old English *losian*) usually intrans. to become loose. Our verb loose is the Middle English *losen*, also from Old English *losian*. (The adjective 'loose' is a Scandinavian form). It is clear therefore that the form 'lose' might have been used in Shakespeare's time as it was earlier in the sense of 'loose.' The meaning of the text is probably:—Put me out of doors and let me go loose.

207. **Unworthy as.**—Although I am unworthy, or however unworthy I am.

208. **Worser**—The forms worse and worser are a little puzzling. Worst is a contraction of *worsest*. 'Worse' is the form of the positive as well as comparative which should have been worser (Teutonic type *wers-isa*, the *s* of the comparative becoming regularly *r* in English). It is possible that in Shakespeare's day worse as an adjective meaning 'bad' was still in conversational use, in which case 'worser' would have been a natural (and habitual) formation and not regarded as a double comparative. But double comparatives and superlatives especially with *more* and *most* were frequent in the Elizabethan age, *e.g.*, 'most unkindest cut of all.'

209. **Respect**—Consideration, estimation. With the close of this speech cf. *Matthew*, XV. 27.

211. **Tempt**—Try.

Hatred of my spirit—My spirit which is full of hatred. Hypallage.

212. **Sick**—Full of loathing.

213. **Sick**—Full of disappointment. An example of the repartee aimed at in dramatic dialogue. Of course Demetrius is very serious and Helena half playful, half earnest.

214. **Impeach**—Bring into question, expose to reproach. The ordinary meaning is to charge or formally accuse. According to Skeat the word is from O.F. *empescher*; Low Lat. *impedicare*, *pedica*, a fetter, Lat. *pes*, a foot; and originally meant hinder; hence detain for trial. At the same time the form and meaning may have been affected by the Spanish *empachar*, Ital. *impacciare*, Lat. *impingere*, to bind. Elsewhere Shakespeare uses the word in senses similar to the present, *i.e.*, of self-impeachment.

215. **To leave**—In leaving.

217. **To trust**...In exposing to the opportunity afforded (to another) by night.....the rich worth...For the sentiment, cf. *Comus*, 398—403. The subject of Opportunity is handled at length in *Lucrece*; stanza 125 *et seq.*

218. **Ill counsel of**—Evil suggestion or prompting due to.

Desert place—Lonely place. The phrase is repeatedly found in the N. T.; as in *Luke*, IX. 10.

219. **With**—There are two alternative constructions: to entrust a thing to a person, or entrust a person with a thing.

The rich worth of your. Your very valuable.

220. **Your virtue** Here again the critics have agreed to depart from the original text. In quartos and folios alike there is a colon after privilege, and full stop at the end of the next line. Shakespeare says: "Your virtue is my privilege, inasmuch as the sight of you makes night to me day." The finely-balanced apophthegm 'your virtue is my privilege' is by the editors rhythmically spoiled and in sense weakened by an appendage ('for that') poorly expressed, and the connection of lines 221 and 222 is cut. Virtue means not chastity, probably, but merit, general excellence, worth, seen in making night day. Privilege (Lat. *privus* single, *lex* law) is what is enjoyed solely by a particular class or an individual. The privilege Helena claims is of accompanying Demetrius by night because to her (and her only) there is no night or darkness in his company; and further in his company there is ample society, since his virtue makes him to her equivalent to all the world.

For that—According to the early punctuation this phrase is adverbial, equal to 'inasmuch as'; according to the revision 'that' is a demonstrative pronoun standing for the thought of the preceding sentence.

221. **Your face**—This is Helena's sun or source of light. The idea finds sacred expression in Keble's hymn:—

> Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear,
> It is not night if thou be near.

222. **I think**...And therefore I act as if. According to Coleridge (and others):—

> Life is but thought, so think I will
> That youth and I are housemates still.

223. **Nor doth**...It is remarkable that the sentiments of lines 221, 223, 224 are conjoined in Tibullus (Latin elegiac poet) as Johnson quoted. The passage may be translated: "To me you are a Light even in a dark night; and in solitary places a crowd."

Worlds of company—Companions innumerable, society abundant.

224. **In my respect**—Either in my eye (*i.e.*, estimation); or, as far as pertains to me. The former is the primary, the latter the secondary, meaning of the phrase.

All the world—All in all, or as good as all the world.

226. This line is an illustration of what was called a 'conceit.'

227. **Hide me**—Hide. The reflexive form was once frequent in English.

Brakes—Thickets, thick bushes.

228. **Mercy**—*i.e.*, cruelty, fierceness. The figure is of the nature of irony. The phrase is familiar.

229. **Wildest**—*i.e.*, of wild beasts.

230. **Run**—Not the imperative, as we think, but the future indicative after 'will.'

Story—This is usually referred to the story of Daphne only. We think it probably refers to the three illustrations given and means *all history and experience* will be changed.

Changed—Reversed; the idea in 'exchanged:' a once frequent sense. Lat. *cambire*, to exchange.

231. **Apollo** .. This is the reversal of the myth.

Daphne holds—Daphne keeps up. The story is that Apollo became enamoured of Daphne, that she fled, and when pursued entreated the gods who transformed her into a laurel tree. This accounts for the laurel being sacred to Apollo. The scene was the banks of the Peneus in Thessaly, or the Ladon in Arcadia. Milton has (*Comus*, 661-2), as Daphne was, rootbound that fled Apollo.

232. **The dove**—A most timid bird, associated with love (see above I. i. 171).

Griffin—A mythical creature, one of the fiercest of winged creatures; having (according to the fabulous description) the body of a lion and the head, wings and claws of an eagle, and being possessed of great strength. A more correct spelling was griffon (as in French and Middle English). The Latin form was *gryphus*, Gr. *grups*. Milton refers to griffins (*P.L.* II. 943—6) as pursuing the one-eyed Arimaspians who had stolen the gold they guarded.

The mild—Note that in these two words the accent is transposed, as in frequent either at the beginning of a verse, or (as here) after a pause. The metrical effect is pleasant; and variety of stress is desirable.

Hind—Feminine of stag. Hinds are proverbially timid. Here we must suppose a kind of deer found in the same regions as the tiger.

233. **Bootless**—Vain. Humorously remarked.

234. **Cowardice Valour**—Helena has repeated the word 'speed' from her last illustration, and thus makes the reference primarily to the hind and tiger. But the three examples illustrate the same principle, and she is thinking mainly of her own case. She uses 'valour' instead of a word expressive of strength merely to bestow another compliment on Demetrius.

The use of the abstract for the concrete is a kind of metonymy.

235. **Stay**—Endure.

Questions—This is changed by some to 'question' without authority. The word seems to be used impatiently for, far-fetched observations, difficult talk.

236. **Believe**—Cherish the delusion.

237. **But I shall**—That I shall not. The 'but' is intended to have a 'preventive force.'

Mischief—Serious personal injury. See I. 244. The older form is *meschief*. The prefix (not the ordinary mis-) is ultimately from Lat. *minus*, not.

238. **Temple town field**—Everywhere. The words are arranged in an anti-climax: temple = sacred place; town stands for society; field, for a lonely place. The field was the open country outside cities or villages.

239. **Fie**—An expression of reproach; of Scandinavian origin.

240. **Your wrongs**—The wrongs you do me.

Set a scandal on my sex—Lead me to do what is improper for me as a woman. Scandal meant originally stumbling-block or cause of error; my sex = my feminine character (not the sex at large). Scandal is ultimately from Gr. *skandalon*, a snare, and the etymological idea was preserved in Shakespeare's time. 'Slander' is a doublet which has developed more rapidly in meaning.

241. **We**—We women. **For love**—To obtain the object of love.

As men.....As Theseus has done. Here Shakespeare remembers that the scene is in pre-historic Greece.

242. **We should be**—We ought to be.

243. **I'll**—The reading of the quartos. The reading of the folios is 'I' which is perhaps better, as she goes out immediately.

Make a heaven of hell—End this state of torture, and enjoy a moment's bliss in Demetrius' (murderous) hands. It is not probable that heaven is here mentioned as a future state or place of bliss.

244. **To die**—In the fact of dying. Helena thus understands 'mischief' to mean death.

Upon the hand—At the hands of him whom. 'Upon' may mean in consequence of, from the action of; or the idea may be that Helena will throw herself on the hand and sword of Demetrius.

245. **Nymph**—This term is usually used of a mythological being of a preternatural kind. Oberon by a sort of metaphor transfers it to a human lady; so frequently in the poets. The original meaning of the Gr. *numphe* was bride, or veiled one.

247. **Welcome wanderer**—Oberon is delighted to find Puck back from the West, as he is now planning the union of Demetrius and Helena. 'Wanderer' is here used for traveller with the idea, not of rambling or going astray, but of going far.

One would have expected the second part of this line to precede the first, but the present arrangement is the only metrical one. The early editions have the point of interrogation in the middle of the line. Lettsom proposed placing it at the end and taking 'welcome' as an adjective.

249. In this verse there are only nine syllables—the loss being fully supplied by the successive stress on the three last syllables. Pope changed 'where' into 'whereon.' Thereby he made up the number ten; but destroyed the stress on the chief word 'thyme' and revealed his own unconsciousness of some of the subtler harmonies of his art.

In the enumeration that follows note that the first three flowers (thyme, oxlips, violet) grow on the ground; above them rise the next three which are of the nature of bushes or shrubs—the wood-bine (or honey-suckle), the musk rose and the eglantine (or sweet-briar).

Wild—Because it grows naturally. The wild **thyme** (properly as in Middle English *tyme*, in the folios *time*) is a fragrant plant or flower.

250. **Oxlips**—According to Lyte, 1578, the oxlip differs from the cowslip in that its "leaves are larger and greater, and its flowers of a pale or faint yellow colour, almost white and without savour."

Nodding violet—As the stalk is slight the violet moves in the gentlest breeze. Violets (or the genus *viola*) are of various species and also of various colours.

Grows—Singular, following the nearer substantive.

251. **Musk roses**—According to Lyte this is the sixth kind of rose, with slender springs and shoots, leaves and

flowers small; flowers sometimes double, of white colour and fragrant.

Quite over canopied—Completely over-arched or covered over as with a canopy.

Luscious—(In the quartos *lushious*) richly-sweet, delicious. Skeat supposes the word is a corruption of *lustious* from lusty, pleasant.

Wood-bine—According to Lyte "Wood-bine or honey-suckle hath many small branches whereby it winds and wraps itself about trees and hedges." It "grows in hedges about enclosed fields, amongst broome or firs, and also in woods." Its epithet is due to its fragrance. But in IV. i. 42, the wood-bine is distinguished from the honey-suckle.

The accentuation or metrical reading of this line is not apparent. The folios spell *over-cannoped* and the last syllable of this word may not have been pronounced. If so and if *luscious* be stressed on the second syllable, the line will be regular. Otherwise 'luscious' must be pronounced as a monosyllable, and the alternative form 'lush' may have resulted from a tendency thereto.

252. **Musk roses**—These are distinguished for their fragrance.

Eglantine—Lyte says: the eglantine or sweet-briar is like to the wild rose plant in sharp and cruel shoots, springs, and rough branches. The name is derived from its prickly character (ultimately Lat. *acus*, a needle). In *L'Allegro*, 48, Milton uses the name for some shrub distinct from the sweet-briar.

This description has been set to music and is an exquisite song. The four lines, 249—252, seem to be the germ of Shelley's poem—A Dream of the Unknown—which as a fuller description deserves study.

253. **Sometime of the**—Sometimes during.

254. **Lulled**—Soothed or charmed into sleep.

Dances and delight—This phrase may constitute one idea. Delight is caused by the fairy sport. The dances give delight and satiety of delight works sleep. There is also the delight of the fragrance and the beauty and the melody. See next scene.

255. **Enamelled**—Describing the variegated skin of the snake. Enamel is an effect of colour produced by burning or smelting. Middle English *enamaile*; Fr. *amaile*, older form *esmail*, of Teutonic origin. Manifestly this skin (or slough) serves as Titania's night dress.

256. **Weed**—Garment: once a familiar word, surviving alliteratively in 'widow's weeds.'

Wrap—Enfold.

257. **And**—This conjunction which troubles the editors is perhaps used vaguely to supply a needed syllable.

Streak—Stroke as if drawing a line. Both streak and stroke are derived from 'strike.'

258. **Fantasies**—The older form of 'fancies' with pretty much the modern meaning: imaginations; fears. The meaning is well illustrated in Milton's *Comus*, 205—

> A thousand fantasies
> Begin to throng into my memory,
> Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
> And airy tongues that syllable men's names,
> On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.

261. **Disdainful**—Scorning her love.

Anoint—As with ointment. 'Anoint' was originally a past participle; O F. *enoindre*, Lat. *in, unguere*.

262. **Espies**—Sees. Spy and espy are alternative forms (the *e-* being due to the French). Lat. *specere*.

264. **By the** . . . By his dress (such as is worn by the citizens of Athens) thou wilt recognise him.

265 **Effect it** . . . .Do it, *i.e.*, the anointing or streaking.

266. **Fond on**—An array of authorities including Rowe, Pope, Theobald, Warburton, have corrupted this to the modern phrase 'fond of.' For reasons not stated they have left the equivalent preposition 'upon' in the next phrase. 'Fond on' means doting on, soft on, foolishly in love with. Fond (original *fonned*) was the past participle of a verb meaning to play the fool. The phrase 'fond of' expresses nothing foolish. One may be fond of things or persons without being sillily in love.

Upon her love—Upon him: 'love' standing for 'beloved one.'

267. **Look thou**—See that thou. **Meet** is subjunctive.

Ere the first cock crow—Before the first crowing of the cock, *i.e.*, about 3 o'clock. A mode of reckoning time in England as in other lands (*Matthew*, XXVI. 34, &c.); the indication of coming day and therefore the fairies' warning. Cf. *L'Allegro*, 114.

268. Puck promises. The fulfilment is indicated, II. ii. 83. These passages must be studied in connection with the time-indications in the play. These indications are very faint, but we are probably to suppose that the night of the elopement is now nearly over. Other two nights have to follow.

SCENE II.

Here Fleay begins his Third Act. In this scene the stories of the Fairies and of the lovers are both carried onward and critically affected by the exercise of magic, while Puck's anointing of Lysander connects and interweaves the diverse elements.

1. **Roundel**—A round dance, which accompanied the chorus of the song. 'Roundel' is properly a poem in which certain lines or words are repeated and thus come 'round.' O.F. *rondel*; later Fr. *rondeau*. A diminutive form was *rondelet*, written in English roundelay. Roundels are written to-day in which the opening words are repeated in the middle and end. In Shakespeare's time this word was in frequent use and was applied also to a dance; as is proved by a passage in Ben Jonson's *Tale of a Tub* where 'rondel' is used of a dance like that of the fays; *i.e.*, a circular hand-in-hand dance.

2. **Then...hence**—Apparently the attendants are asked to go away for 20 seconds that during this interval of silence the queen may fall asleep. Then they may return. The third part of a minute is supposed to be to the fairies a considerable length of time (as half an hour might be to mortals).

3. **Some**...One of the beneficent tasks of the fairies.

Cankers—Destructive insects; a kind of larva that feeds on the budding rose.

4. **Rere-mice**—Bats; lit. flying (or fluttering) mice. Anglo-Saxon *hrerê-mus* from *hreran* to agitate (flap wings). The bats fly in the evening and are supposed to indicate ill-luck.

5. **Clamorous owl that nightly hoots**—The owl has ever been reckoned a bird of evil omen. Titania imagines it is hooting (jeering at, insulting) the Fairy band. The epithet 'clamorous' is due to its loud and mournful strains. Cf. in Gray's elegy—

> The moping owl doth to the moon complain.

The owl and the nightingale are the chief birds that are heard by night.

7. **Quaint spirits**—Quaint is a natural epithet of their games and dances. Spirits would seem to be used in the sense of 'exercises.'

8. **Offices**—Duties as above defined. Lat. *officium*, duty.

9—12. One Fairy sings ordering off with her charms animals believed to be noxious.

10. **Thorny**—The hedgehog's entire body is covered with thick spines or thorns which serve as a defence against other animals. Hedgehogs (or urchins) were believed to injure

the crops, and goblins sometimes took the form of **hedgehogs**. In *Comus* 845 the goddess Sabrina visits the herds and meadows "helping all urchin blasts."

11. **Newts**—Water-lizards. Newt = an ewt, formerly *éveste*; cf. other form *eft* used by Tennyson, &c. The base *ev* (or ef) is the same as Sansk. *ap*, water.

Blind-worms—Also called slow-worms: a kind of serpent formerly believed to be poisonous. Both newts and blind-worms are now reckoned harmless.

13—19. This chorus is sung by all as they dance in the ring.

13. **Philomel**—A poetic name of the Nightingale. According to the myth, Philomela, the unhappy daughter of Pandion King of Attica, was transformed into this bird. Her song is sad—

> Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well.
>
> Its theme is love—
>
> She all night long her amorous descant sang.

The chorus call on Philomel to join in the lullaby by which they lull Titania asleep.

14. **Lullaby**—A song that lulls to rest. The word is imitative of the cry lu lu in putting children to sleep: from the Scandinavian. Note that lullaby always and here melody are pronounced to rhyme with 'nigh.'

16-17. May no evil influence come near our queen.

20—23. Song of second Fairy; warning off creatures of a less active but repellent kind, viz., spiders, beetles, worms and snails. The 'weaving spiders' are the same as the 'long-legged spinners'—the name spider having been originally spinder. Some spiders were believed to be poisonous, and probably popular opinion attributed noxious qualities to each of the four kinds specified.

24. The same chorus is repeated in the same style.

25. The leading Fairy bids the others off to the fulfilment of their respective duties, as the queen is quietly falling asleep.

26. **One**.....Let one stand a little apart to guard the approaches. According to Skeat **aloof** (*on loof*) was originally a Dutch phrase or the equivalent of a Dutch phrase meaning 'to wind-ward', that is, away from the sands or rocks. **Sentinel** is through the Italian and has been derived (as in *Skeat*) from the low Lat. *sentinator*, one who pumps water from the hold (*sentina*) of a ship, and (formerly) from Lat. *semita*, Fr. *sentier*, a path. The spelling of the early editions here is *centinell*, Spenser wrote *centonell*, and the Spanish form of the

word begins with c, all which would seem to point to an ancient supposition of a derivation from Lat. *centum* (as in centurion).

27. **What**.....Spoken in the act of streaking or anointing. Note that 'seest' and 'wakest' (l. 33) are monosyllables.

28. **Do it**.....Take it to be. **True-love** here is the concrete.

29. **Languish**—Be love-sick and pine away.

30. **Ounce**—A kind of lynx. Fr. *once*, cf. *Pers yuz*.

Cat—The wild-cat or cat-o'-the mountain, as the association and locality require.

31. **Pard**—called in Milton "the spotted mountain pard" (*Comus* 444); a kind of leopard or the class to which the leopard belongs. Three kindred animals are referred to by the older writers—panthers, pardels and leopards. The word (Lat. *pardus*, Gr. *pardos*, Pers. *pars*) is of Eastern origin.

With this list of wild animals of above II. i. 180. Milton also loved to accumulate such names, as in *Comus* 70-71, "Wolf or bear or ounce or tiger, hog or bearded goat;" and *P.L.* IV. 344.

33. **Dear**—Subst. = darling (dimin. form).

34. **Vile**—Ugly, hideous.

The last five lines had originally (as is probable) one rhyme—not the sound of near or dear, but an intermediate sound which in some cases has become *ee* (as hear), in others ä (as hair).

36. **Troth**—A variety of *truth*. See line 42.

Forgot—We now say, forgotten.

37. **Rest us**—Rest, cf. l. 227 of preceding scene.

38. **Comfort**..Day-light with its comfort. The root-meaning of 'comfort' is strength. Lat. *fortis*.

39. **Be it so**—Agreed; let it be so.

A bed—*i.e.*, for yourself.

41. **Turf**—Same as 'bank' of preceding line. **Pillow** = Middle English *pilwe*, from Lat. *pulvinus*; introduced into first English as *pyle*.

Us both—Both (a Scandinavian word) is here used as an adj.

42. **One heart, one bed**—One heart and therefore one bed. Cf. the modern-phrase 'one man, one vote.'

One heart...two bosoms—This contrast emphasises the metaphorical sense of 'heart' as equivalent to mind regarded as the seat of feeling. Bosom (orig. *bosm*) is what contains the heart; heart is what was supposed to be the seat of feeling.

One troth—Though the bosoms are distinct, the troth belongs equally to both and has no meaning otherwise. The

word seems intended to combine the idea of community of thought and feeling with unalterable fidelity. Shakespeare is echoing the manner of *Eph.* IV. where, however, 'one faith' denotes something objective, one common belief. See explanation in Lysander's next speech.

44. **Yet**—Still further.

45. **Take the sense ..of**—See through and fully believe; rely upon the knowledge of. 'Sense' is the same as 'meaning' in next line. Shakespeare seems playing on the sound repeated in the last syllable of the verse. There is also a play on the meaning of 'lie' in the previous line. See lines 52, 55.

46. **Love takes**—Love catches the true meaning, understands the real feeling or intention, is not mistaken. Love is personified.

47. **In love's conference**—Conference meant conversation, and conversation meant behaviour. The meaning is; when lovers are alone in free mutual trust, when soul has direct intercourse with soul and there are no doubts, suspicions or mistakes.

48. **I mean** ..Shakespeare now endeavours to express more clearly the sense or meaning. It is that they have become spiritually one.

But one heart—Only one; not two, but one. The phrase of line 42 is thus justified by the sentiment of line 48. (First conclusion of the argument).

49. **Inter-chained**—Mutually linked or fastened.

Oath—Not the rite of marriage or bonds of wedlock, but the sacramental pledge of the soul.

50. **So then**—Thus therefore (I infer, as above l. 42). (Second conclusion of the argument).

51. **Bed-room**—Sleeping space.

52. **So**—Beside you to whom I am already figuratively tied (bosoms being interchained).

Do not lie—Act in accordance with the 'oath' which interchains us; do not act falsely. There is here a play on the word lie. Note that the second use has reference to deed, not word.

In this scene 'Hermia' is a dis-syllable. In last scene as spoken by Demetrius the name was a tri-syllable. The change may be due to the affectionate relationship of the lovers.

53. **Riddles**—Speaks poetical enigmas or proverbs. The noun 'riddle' (A.S. *rædelse*) was a familiar old word for what required explanation; from 'read' which originally meant to discern. Lysander's sayings were playful yet withal deeply serious, and Hermia seems not quite certain of what he means.

She, too, however riddles pleasantly in her way, and perhaps intentionally begins and ends this line with other uses of the syllable *lie* (or *ly*). She can pun too if not very profoundly.

54. **Much beshrew**—Or, as some say, confound; a plague on.

Manners—This word in Elizabethan English included with the modern meaning (of politeness or breeding), the meaning of morals.

Pride—Haughtiness, if I did so disrespectfully refer to my love.

55. **Meant**—Whether she said so or not she protests that she did not do so intentionally or deliberately.

56. **For love and courtesy**—For the sake of (or in honour of) these two qualities of the noble and chivalrous character. Courtesy—the gentle and attentive bearing supposed to be inculcated at courts—was reckoned one of the chief virtues of chivalry and Spenser assigned to it a Book of his *Fairy Queen*.

57. **Human modesty**—Human may mean 'common,' such as pertains to all men; or, may it not have the other meaning of the word (now written humane), viz., cultured, educated, refined, *i.e.*, according to the manners of better society?

The semi-colon in this line is inserted by the critics, to connect 'modesty' with the following lines; but they are again wrong.

58. **Separation**—Distance. There is no ellipsis here (as is supposed). The idea of such separation is repeated in the appositional phrase 'so far' (line 60). Lines 58-59 define the 'so far.'

May.....**said**—These words are parenthetical.

59. **Virtuous**—The adj. goes with bachelor only; it is implied in 'maid.' '**Bachelor**' is through old Fr. from Low Lat. *baccalarius*, the tenant of a small farm; perhaps from *baca*, a cow.

61. **Thy love ne'er alter**—Hermia will awake to find love altered. Such is the irony of life.

62. **Amen, amen**—According to the manner of a congregation which thus at the close assents to and (as it were) repeats the prayer uttered by the minister. 'Amen' is a Hebrew word meaning truly or (as in English usage) 'may it be so.'

63. **Then end life when**—May I die when; may my life end then when.

Loyalty—Fidelity to his lady, no alteration of his love (l. 61). Tennyson has 'love-loyal.'

64. **Here is**.....He has found a suitable spot.

Sleep give.... .A final wish. Sleep is personified and supposed to be able to dispense various degrees of **rest**. Lysander wishes the fulness thereof for his lady.

65. Hermia replies: may the fulness be equally divided between us. **Wisher's**, *i.e.*, Lysander's. **Pressed**, weighed down (with sleep).

67. **Found**—A corruption of the text, which is 'find' and was meant to imply that the search is not yet abandoned.

68. **Approve**—Put to the test and verify. Might is to be understood not as a past tense, but simply as potential.

69. **Stirring**—Awakening or exciting where it did not formerly exist.

70. **Night and Silence**—Apparently an exclamation of surprise. Cf. *Comus* 580, O night and shades.

Weeds—Garb, dress; a word still preserved in the phrase 'widow's weeds.'

73. **Despised**—Who despised. The omission of the relative was characteristic of Early English, and is frequent in ballads, also in Burns and Scott. The words 'my master said' are purely parenthetical and were originally in brackets. Despised is a trisyllable.

75. **Dank and dirty**—Dank is wet, moist. The word (and also daggle) is from the Scandinavian, but akin to English dew. Milton has: Now that the fields are dank and ways are mire (Sonnet to Lawrence). Puck talks as if he felt pity for Hermia.

76. **Pretty soul**—Pretty creature. This use of soul (as in 'poor soul') indicates compassion.

She durst—She was not allowed to; an erroneous explanation of course. Puck was not omniscient. 'Durst' is the past tense of 'dare.' The *s* is in the original root. Cf. Goth. *daursan*, Greek *tharsein*.

77. This line which seems too long has been amended in every possible way. The only thing to note is that 'courtesy' is a dissyllable (as in the vulgar *curtsie*, but such language suits Puck). The line is with this pronunciation perfectly regular. In this speech as in all the older four-beat poetry the first (unstressed) syllable is frequently wanting; but it is present in lines 69, 73, 74 as well as here.

Lack-love kill-courtesy—These compounds are formed by Puck to express his contempt for the cold and unchivalrous character of the Athenian. Note that again (as in l. 56) love and courtesy are combined as chivalrous requirements.

78. **Churl**—Ill-bred man, who would act as described. The word originally meant, man (A.S. *ceorl*) and was opposed to

earl (*eorl*), a man of rank or office. Now it is opposed to gentleman.

79. **This charm**—This magic juice.

Owe—Possess. The original meaning of the word; hence own, &c. The sense of being under obligation to is secondary, from the idea of possessing another's property.

80-81. **Let love forbid sleep**.....May you be so mad with love that you can sleep (or find rest) no more. Sleep, personified in the manner of the poets, is regarded as having his seat (or abode) on the man's eyelids. Apparently Puck pronounces this semi-curse from indignation at finding him sleeping dully so near a fair lady. A similar reference to sleep as seated on the eyelids is in *Macbeth*, I. iii. 19-20.

82. **So**—As described in line 81; *i.e.*, not to sleep again.

83. **Now to**—Now hasten to. See on IV. i. 267. So in *Comus* Sabrina after exercising her power says—

> And I must haste, ere morning hour,
> To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

84. **Stay**—Helena is still following or pursuing, as she was when they disappeared in the preceding scene. We must suppose that she has been chasing him during all the interval, and that now for a minute they again cross the stage.

Though thou kill—As above II. i. 244.

85. **Haunt**—Turn up wherever I go.

86. **Darkling**—In the dark: an adverb; *ling* being an old adverbial suffix, modified in 'headlong.'

87. **On thy peril**—At thy peril; at the peril of thy life.

88. **Out of breath**—Exhausted.

Fond—Crazed, insane. See above II. i. 266.

89. **Lesser**—Double comparative; not akin to little. Cf. worser.

My grace—The favour bestowed on me. Note that both the substantives, prayer and grace, are used with verbal force, being qualified by the adverbial expressions, the more, the lesser.

91. **Attractive**—Compare, 'lodestars' used of the same eyes, I. i. 183.

92. **Came**—Became.

Salt tears—Bitter weeping.

93. **If so my eyes are**—This is very elliptically or imperfectly expressed. The meaning clearly is: If that be the case my eyes must be brighter than hers for they are oftener.....

Washed—Bathed with tears.

94. **No, no**—*I.e.*, weeping does not brighten and beautify her eyes.

Ugly as a bear—Perhaps a proverbial expression.

95. **For beasts**.....Helena takes this as a proof of her repellent appearance; a sign that love has made her crazed or halt insane.

96. **No marvel**—It is not marvellous (or wonderful). So 'reason' was often used for 'reasonable.'

97. **Do as**.....Fly from my presence as from a monster. She is beginning to imagine that she is ugly to the extent of monstrosity.

98. **Dissembling glass**—Mirror reflecting a falsely favourable likeness of me. Glass (*i.e.*, looking-glass) was the ordinary term for a mirror. Apparently the wickedness of Helena's looking-glass consisted in its having made her think her eyes beautiful. Helena now in her raving is convinced that her eyes are not beautiful and that she beheld a false or flattering image. Dissembling (through old Fr.) and dissimulation are from Lat. *dis, similis*, like.

99. **Compare**—Make comparisons. Used intransitively, but equal to 'compare my eyes.'

Sphery eyne—Star-like eyes. The reference is to the bright sparkling character pertaining to the eyes and stars. Cf. line 92. Milton uses the adjective 'sphery' at the close of *Comus*. For 'eyne,' see I. i. 242 where Helena makes her first reference to Hermia's eyes.

103. **And run through fire**—Yes I awake and am ready to undergo any peril. The juice has been effective.

104. **Transparent Helena**—This transparency is explained in next line. It is a result of the now strangely excited vision of Lysander. The effect of the juice on the eyes is to make the first seen though ugly seem beautiful, and in this case to make the bodily form seem translucent.

Nature.....**Art**—Here it is really difficult to determine the exact reading. (1) The quartos have Nature shows art; (2) the first folio, Nature her shows art; (3) the subsequent folios, Nature here shows art; (4) a modern emendation has by transposition, Nature shows her art. Evidently (2) contains a misprint, which in (3) and (4) is corrected, but arbitrarily, so that the correction has to be judged on its merits. The reading (3) of the later folios is not good metrically as it gives three stressed syllables (without corresponding emphasis, or pleasing musical effect) at the end. Note also that the 'that' of next line is the relative pronoun while the insertion of 'here' would lead us to expect a conjunction. There is little to choose between (1) and (4). In the former case 'Helena' becomes a trisyllable; in the latter a dissyllable, but with the

middle not the final syllable elided. Hitherto 'Helena' has been fully pronounced, but in line 119 it is a dissyllable (Hel'na) and it seems to be Shakespeare's intention to make Lysander in his excitement pronounce the name rapidly (or affectionately). Our suggestion is that Shakespeare *first* wrote (as in the quartos) Nature shows art, the transposition of stress in the fourth foot (*i.e.*, in the word Nature) being such as is elegant after a pause (or at the beginning of a line); and that later Shakespeare, in accordance with the greater freedom of his mature manner having come to regard Helena as capable of being treated as a dissyllable, inserted 'her' as an emendation which the printers misplaced. We therefore accept (4) as the final authoritative reading.

This, as the correct reading, was suggested by Malone, and has been adopted by several editors including Knight, Halliwell, Dyce, &c. It is strongly objected to by Mr. Furness on the ground that it removes the surprise which Lysander felt. Lysander's surprise, however, was simply in the vision of Helena and not in any philosophical theory. The reference to nature and art is simply a connecting link enabling him to express more distinctly his unwonted discovery. Mr. Furness also thinks that if the lady's name is to be read as a dissyllable it must be printed Helen, a judgment which we think entirely erroneous. Helena is the reading of all the early editions and must be adhered to.

105. **That**—According to the reading 'her art' *that* is the simple relative, relating to Nature or to her art which can work wonders; according to the reading 'shows art,' that may be the simple relative following either 'nature,' or 'art'; or may be the conjunctive relative following nature, equal to, inasmuch as she can.....

Thy heart—It is astonishing that editors refer respectfully to Walker's presumptuous emendation *my* heart. There is no limit to absurdity. Transparent water (or air) is that through which we see the bottom—not that in which we see *our own* faces, still less in which we see *our own hearts*. The transparent object through which Lysander could have seen *his own* heart was not invented in Shakespeare's day—nor in ours. Lysander does not refer to a mirror or any *reflecting* object which might have shown him himself.

The sentiment of this couplet is of course a conceit. Helena is supposed to be all luminous, so that the excellences of her soul may be instantly seen (or in her bosom her heart). The thought must be connected with Lysander's suddenly transfigured vision. Helena too, it is to be remembered, is in

a highly-excited state, a crazed heroine of fiction, probably dressed in white, with staring eyes.

Compare below lines 121, 122, where Lysander sees **marvels** in her eyes.

106, 107. **Word**...**name**—Older writers frequently used the term 'name' for the person. Cf. Milton's 'dreaded name of Demigorgon' (*Paradise Lost*, II. 965) where the phrase simply means dreadful Demigorgon. Here both 'word' and 'name' stand for the man; but Lysander seems to imply that the name is in keeping with the man, *i.e.*, hateful or contemptible as the man. No explanation need be asked as Lysander is now irrational.

108. Note in this line and in lines 109, 125, 126, 129 repetitions of phrases, with or without variations. Here also there is alliteration. It is a manner of Helena's madness.

109. **What though**.... Why should you be disconcerted by his loving Hermia (seeing that it is you that she still loves.)

110. **Be content**—Peaceful, undisturbed; with a recollection of the root-meaning, contained, self-controlled.

111. **Content with**—In the manner of sharp dialogue the word is repeated here exactly in the modern meaning 'satisfied.'

Do repent—'Do' here, since it bears the stress, is probably emphatic though usually it was a mere expletive. Its insertion makes *Hermia*, a dissyllable.

112. **Tedious**—Weary, uninteresting (as they now seem).

113. **Hermia**—A trisyllable; thus variously and according to the humour to the speaker could the name be pronounced.

Helena now—The 'now' is wanting in the first quarto, and is omitted by most editors. It is found in the second quarto and in all the folios. Its insertion is a very great improvement to the line and is undoubtedly the true reading. Shakespeare may have originally written the line as in the quarto with the two names trisyllabically balanced, but even a child's ear must have been offended by that rhythm, which the genius of the eighteenth century restored. The 'now' also improves the sense, preparing us for the word 'change' in next line and for lines 118—120. 'Helena' is to be pronounced Hel'na, according to the manner of the liquid consonants. Such elision belongs mainly to the maturer style.

114. **Change**—Give in exchange. For the reverse use of *change* = take in exchange, cf. Ben Jonson's song—

> But might I of Jove's nectar sip
> I would not change for thine.

114. **Raven.....dove**—In this allegory Hermia is likened to a raven and Helena to a dove, the contrast being of fierceness and gentleness, rather than of ugliness and beauty. Lysander has seen Helena's heart and deems her dovelike.

115. **Will..... reason**—In Shakespeare's time the human mind was divided into these two (not three) parts; and thus 'will' included not only volition, but also emotion and desire. In Shakespeare the meaning is still more indefinite. In the Sonnets he plays on the word; sometimes using it as nearly equivalent to love. See, *e.g.*, 135, 136.

116. **And reason** . .. The humour of the line is in its being spoken by a man who has lost his reason.

117. **Things growing**—Crops, fruits, &c.

Season—Etymologically, the sowing-time (Lat. *satio*); here, as usually, the gathering time.

118. **Till now ripe not**—Here 'ripe' is almost certainly a verb, as the word may still be heard provincially. Cf. *A.Y.L.I.*, II. 7, so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe. The present tense probably indicates the suddenness of the ripening that has come over Lysander. The meaning then is; Have not become until now ripe in (or for) the exercise of reason.

119. **Point**—Summit, highest capacity. The words seem to claim not only that Lysander has attained the full development of his own power, but the utmost humanity is capable of.

120. **Marshal**—Director, introducer. This word originally meant a groom or horse-servant (from the masc. form corresponding to mare), but has been elevated to describe the Earl-Mareschal of a kingdom or the Field-Marshal of an army. The duties of a Marshal (as the word is used here) were to arrange feasts and entertainments and to lead or direct guests and visitors.

Scott uses it as a verb: permit I marshal you the way, *Lady of the Lake*, VI. So *Hamlet*, III. iv. 205.

121. **Leads me**—Movement depends on the will. Hence reason by leading the will leads the person.

Your eyes—The place of state to which my soul is led.

O'erlook—Read, or read over.

122. **Love's stories**—The nature, qualities and workings of love.

Love's richest book—The lady's eyes (and face); a bold metaphor in the manner of Elizabethan conceits. The meaning is that more can be learned of love in the lady's eyes than in any book describing love. In the eyes is the fullest expression of the soul or inner life.

123, 124. **Mockery**.....**scorn**—The two lines are (in Helena's manner) almost equivalent. She regards Lysander as insincere and therefore making love in mockery or scorn.

Young man—A term of distant address. She carefully avoids the language of friendship.

126. **Nor never**—And never. Formerly double negatives simply contained greater emphasis.

128. **But you must flout**—Without your flouting, *i.e.*, jeering at. Flout is derived from the old Dutch *fluyt*, a flute.

129. **Insufficiency**—Defect of beauty or character. Sufficiency meant ability or fitness. Helena is irrationally sensitive regarding her charms. To jeer at her imperfection is what she deems churlish enough. Lysander went much farther in making (as she supposes) mock love to her. This was treating her as if she were silly as well as insufficient.

129. **Troth**.....**sooth**—Repetitions, both equal to truth.

130. **Woo**—Referring to external forms only.

131. **Perforce I must confess**—I am obliged (or compelled) to say.

132. **Lord of**.....A truer gentleman: lord of = possessing and able to exercise.

Gentleness—Good breeding, the character of a gentleman.

133. **O that**—Alas (to think) that.

134. **Abused**—Wrongly used; taken advantage of. Abused which now means slandered formerly meant misused.

Helena having thus relieved her mind goes out.

137, 138. **As a surfeit**.....**brings**—As excessive eating of sweets produces indigestion and disgust.

139, 140. **As the heresies**..... As the erroneous doctrines that men for a time held are hated more than other equally bad errors which they never held. Heresy (Gr. *hairesis*) was the term applied to doctrines held by some Christians but rejected or denounced by the Church. **Do leave** = abandon. **Of those** = by those. So in line 142.

141. **So thou, my**.....So mayest thou who art to me as a.....

142. **But the most of me**—But by me more than by all others.

143. **All my powers**—Vocative case. Powers (*i.e.*, capacities, faculties) are personified and apostrophised.

Address your.....Turn, direct (according to the etymological signification). To address oneself to a task is to set oneself earnestly to the performance of it.

144. To.....The two clauses of this line mean the same

thing. The duty of knights is thus described by Tennyson (*Guinevere*)—

> To love one maiden only, cleave to her
> And worship her by years of noble deeds
> Until they won her.....

145—150. Hermia has had a hideous dream. It is a manner of poets to communicate to their characters dreadful dreams in anticipation of coming disaster. The practice is founded on popular conviction of what sometimes really happens. It would be interesting to know if Shakespeare believed in theories of spiritual affinity by which unconsciously (and even while one is asleep) one spirit may affect another. He was too wise to explain: "Others abide our question, thou art free." (M. Arnold's *Sonnet*).

145. **Help me**—A cry of distress.

146. **To pluck**. . .Hermia is not quite awake and still seems to see the snake. A serpent is supposed to be loathsome, cunning and treacherous as well as venomous. 'Crawling' is the literal meaning of the name.

147. **For pity**—An appeal or the expression of a desire for sympathy.

148. **Do**—Expletive. Pope changed 'I do' into 'do I' corrupting the expression. Modern English omits the 'do.'

149. **Eat**, *i.e.*, ate, the past tense. The original spelling was *eate* which served both for past and present and was pronounced according to the intermediate (now lost) sound.

My heart away—The serpent which was crawling over seemed to be gradually consuming her whole heart. The vision is symbolical of the treacherous destruction of affections.

150. **Yet**—The reading of the folios is 'yet,' of the quartos 'you.' Doubtless 'you' was the original reading as indicated by 'sat' (the serpent being crawling); and Shakespeare may have made the change not to suggest any possibility of distrust of Lysander in Hermia's mind. 'Yet' (*i.e.*, at the same time) makes the contrast sharper and the falsehood of the serpent more pronounced. 'Smiling' is a bold expression (but not impossible regarding night-mare) of a snake. It is possible, however, that 'yet' came in as a mere misprint.

Prey—Verbal noun; the act of preying, not the victim as the epithet shows.

151. **Lysander! what removed?**—As Lysander has not come to her help she exclaims and interrogates. 'What?' either means 'why?' (Lat. *quid*), or simply marks interrogation (as equivalent to, art thou?).

Removed—Gone away. In Sonnet 116 the term has a direct reference to change in love.

Lord—Whom I acknowledge as my lord (future husband).

152. **What? out of hearing? gone?**—The three parts are separate (though with commas in the original editions after *what* and *hearing*). She asks successively: what is the meaning of this? art thou beyond the range of my voice? hast thou deserted me altogether? no sound? no word? After a pause she asks: Is there to be no sound of any kind—nothing to give me hope or comfort.

153. **Alack**.....An exclamation of sorrow; supposed to be a compound of *a* and *lack*.

An if—In the original text 'and if'; a double *if*, here suiting the emphasis.

154. **Speak, of all loves**—Speak I implore you by all that is sacred in love. The phrase 'of all loves' occurs again in the *Merry Wives*, II. ii. 119, and elsewhere. With the sentiment compare in Wordsworth's *Sonnet*—

Speak that my torturing doubts their end may know.

Swoon almost—Almost swoon. The first folio has *sound*, the later folios, *swound*; the first quarto, *swoune*, the second, *swound*; various spellings of one word; also written *swoone*, *swowne*, &c.

No?—Is there really no answer?

155. **Well perceive**—Know for certain.

156. She is now wide awake, and goes off in search uttering this line in which she vows either to find her beloved or (if she has lost him) to die.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

In this scene the rude mechanics appear, for their rehearsal, in the wood, and near the spot where Titania lies asleep unseen. Thus the dainty delicate fairies and the coarse hempen 'homespuns' are brought together, and in the end Titania is "enamoured of an ass." We now see the beginnings of the contact and mutual influences of three different lines of story and kinds of characters. The division of Acts at this point seems artificial.

2. **Pat, pat**—Exactly as required. Cf. below V. 183. According to Skeat it is the same word as tap, to strike, but changed in meaning from confusion with Dutch *pas*, fit (which is from the French).

Marvellous—The adverb for the adj., as is frequent in vulgar speech.

4. **Tiring house**—Attiring or dressing room; usually behind the stage.

5. **Action**—Acting. We will act here as we will in presence of the Duke.

8. **Bully**—A 'noisy rough fellow' (Skeat) but used without reproach; now a blustering braggart. A Low German or Dutch word.

9. **Comedy**—See I. ii. 11.

12. **Abide**—Endure.

13. **By 'r lakin**—In the folios Berlaken; said to be a corruption of by our lady-kin (*i.e.*, the Virgin Mary familiarly remembered). The suffix is the diminutive *kin*.

Parlous—Perilous; used simply to intensify.

14. **I believe**—Starveling, like Bottom, does not comprehend what is meant by acting.

When all is done—Compare the phrase 'after all.'

16. **I have a device**.....Bottom's plan, which he thinks clever, is meant to show his utter stupidity or inaptitude.

17. **Prologue**—Lit. fore-word, as epilogue is after-word. In the English drama these are distinct from the play, and being addressed to the audience frequently contain explanations or apologies and requests.

Seem to say—Say. Bottom does not understand his own words.

20. **But Bottom**—This is supposed by some to be a reminder of a historic incident in which in the presence of Elizabeth, an actor, Harry Goldingham, threw aside his disguise and announced his name.

23. **Eight and six**—Lines of eight and six syllables alternately, the more modern modification of the old fourteen syllabled ballad metre.

24. **Make it**.....Nonsense; to exhibit Bottom's presumptuous ignorance. The actual prologue (V. i. 108) is in decasyllabic verse.

25. **Afeard**—Afraid. An old form derived from 'fear' while afraid is from 'affray.' Snout introduces another difficulty.

26. **It**—That they will. **Promise**—Assure.

29. **Dreadful thing**—There is believed by some to be a reference here to an incident that occurred at the christening of Prince Henry (in Scotland), 30th August 1594. It had been arranged that a triumphal chariot was to be brought in by a lion; but it was deemed prudent to substitute for the lion a Moor.

Fearful—Terrible. The word now more correctly means timid.

30. **Wild-fowl**—Wild beast. Bottom has often heard wild-fowl and supposes it means any animal.

31. **Look to 't**—Consider the matter.

35. **Through the lion's neck**—A comical expression. Bottom means that the actor who is to be dressed as a lion with splendid mane must have his face half-unmasked that the audience may see and know that it is not a lion. In such grotesque ways Bottom is to 'make all well.' For the whole of this speech see V. i. 213—220 and notes thereon.

37. **Defect**—For effect.

My life for yours—I pledge or stake my life on your behalf.

42. **Is Snug the joiner**—This information communicated to the King and Queen and courtiers in their palace is the climax of absurdity. Bottom unhesitatingly regards himself and his associates as fitted to converse with princes.

43. **Is two**.....There are two things involving real difficulty.

44. **That is**—Namely. He is interrupted before he can state the second which is given in line 57.

48. A **calendar**—Bottom calls for a calendar and an almanac [to show that he has some learning?] (Lat. *calendar*, the calends or first of the month; hence *calendarium*, an account book).

49. **Moonshine**—He means when the moon shines. Moonshine is a familiar term for what is worthless.

50. **Yea it doth**—Not visibly on the night of the new moon. But the assumption is made for Shakespeare's convenience and Quince may err with impunity. This passage may, of course, be quoted in favour of the view that the moon was to be about a week old at the date of the marriage. See notes on I. i. 3, 9, 10, and 209.

51. **Casement**—Ignorantly used for a part of the window. The term is correctly used either as equivalent to window, or specially of the frame-work.

Where—Referring to *chamber*.

54. **Bush of thorns and a lanthorne**—The true spelling is lantern, the form lanthorne having come into use because the sides were made of horn. The man carrying the bush seems intended to represent the 'man in the moon' whose existence in popular belief or language was due to the resemblance to a man with sticks which the darker parts of the moon were supposed to make. At the same time as the man

must be outside the lantern the idea is incongruous—though therein may lie the fun of it.

55. **Disfigure**—Figure. Quince's *English* is not much better than Bottom's.

56. **Present, the person of**—Represent the character of. The use of *person* as applied to moonlight is comical, but the error is not great as the Latin *persona* meant originally a mask; and the stage-word 'person' denotes the character acted, not the actor.

57. **Another thing**—The second 'hard thing.'

A wall in.....Quince cannot conceive of the wall as placed anywhere except in the great hall.

62. **Loam**—Clay, mortar. The Collier MS. has 'lime.'

63. **Rough-cast**—Plaster or mortar mixed with small stones.

About him—The man is the wall or the centre of it; but he must be plastered over, or must in some way carry quantities of loam so as to resemble a wall.

And let—The early editions have 'or' which is evidently Bottom's mistake for 'and.' It introduces not an alternative but an essential part of the device. Between the fingers Bottom finds the proper width of a chink.

69. **That brake**—Which is to serve as a retiring (as well as attiring) room.

70. **Cue**—Turn or time of entrance. A stage word of uncertain origin. Explained by some as the same as Fr. *queue* (from Lat. *cauda*, the tail), because the *cue* was given at the conclusion of the preceding speech. Others regard it as simply pronouncing the letter Q which was said to be a mark in the actors' copies of the plays. To follow the cue of, is to take the lead from. Later passages show that the cue was given in the closing words of the preceding speaker. See line 95.

71—74. These lines are spoken by Puck (who has just entered not knowing) while the preliminaries are going on.

71. **Hempen home-spuns**—Rustics clothed with home-spun hemp or kindred material. Hempen was a word of the fairies. The suffix usually indicates material (cf. woollen) and the adj. is primarily applicable to the dress, not to the persons.

72. **Cradle**—Bed.

73. **Toward**—Coming on, preparing.

Auditor—Listener, one of the audience.

74. **Actor**—Puck means in some way devised by himself.

76. Bottom's repetition of this line contains more errors

than the one not very distinctly corrected by Quince. The 'bath' of line 79 suggests that the 'of' is for have (pronounced 'av.) In line 77 the quartos have for the second word 'odorous' and this may be intended as the true correction. The line would thus read—

Thisbe, the flowers have odorous savours sweet.

82. Puck's reflection in anticipation of Bottom's returning with the ass's head on.

83. **See a noise**—A ludicrous expression, but such as might be used by peasants where the meaning, to ascertain the cause of the noise, would be readily understood.

86—91. This speech is to be understood as containing errors not corrected. Quince is not supposed to be competent. Pyramus is at once radiant, white and red. These colours require some adjustment. The **triumphant brier** is the rose-bush bright with roses. **Brisky juvenal** is, perhaps, an imitation of brisk and juvenile; but the form 'juvenal' was in use and 'brisky' may be for 'briskly.'

89. **Eke**—And, also; an almost obsolete conjunction, frequent in Spenser but not ordinarily used by Shakspere. Used in Cowper's 'John Gilpin.'

Jew—As Pyramus was a Babylonian it was no great stretch to call him a Jew, the two races being readily confounded by the uneducated.

Note that these four lines are Alexandrines, or twelve-syllabled lines.

91. **I'll meet**.....As explained by Quince, Flute (*i.e.*, Thisbe) should not have spoken this sentence now. It was meant for a later stage in answer to Pyramus; but he has not learned when to stop.

Ninny's—These rustics had a tendency to end words with *y*. So Thisby for Thisbe, brisky, &c. Ninus was the founder of the great city of Nineveh.

94. **Cues and all**—Including cues.

Pyramus enter; your.....Pyramus (*i.e.*, Bottom) thus neglected to 'enter' or come forward at the proper time. It is explained that his 'cue' was "never tire," *i.e.*, the last words of line 90. These words should have closed the speech of Flute, and at the same time have brought on the next speaker. From this it appears that at least one kind of cue was the closing words of the preceding speaker—a fact which favours the derivation from *cauda*, tail.

96. **O, As true**—Flute repeats the line apparently to give Bottom another chance of following his cue.

97. **If I were**.....This line as it stands contains some error. Perhaps intentionally as Bottom could not be expected to do anything correctly. The proposal to put the comma before instead of after 'fair' seems to show the sense. In that case 'true' is understood after were. The wrong punctuation shows how blunderingly Bottom may be speaking his part.

98. **O monstrous**.....As this sentence is an ejaculation due to the appearance of Bottom it is not in metre. **Haunted** refers to the presence of spirits as shown by the miracle.

100. **Round**—A dance, in the figurative sense still borne by the word of a course of difficulties.

Note that 'you about' must be reckoned as two syllables—the two vowel sounds gliding into one another.

101. **Through**—This line contains only eight syllables. Puck may be following the old native popular style in which stresses rather than syllables were counted, or two words may have been lost. Bog and bush, brake and brier are alliterative pairs.

102-103. **Sometime**—According to the popular idea that spirits can take any shape.

Hound is the old general word for dog; etymologically the same as Lat. *canis*. The final *d* is excrescent. **Hog** is a pig (or boar). **Headless** is to be regarded as Puck's description of the actual head of the bear.

105. **And neigh**.....The cry characteristic of the animal is given according to due order.

Note that this speech is a stanza of the form used in *Venus and Adonis*.

107. **Knavery of them**.....Trick of theirs to frighten me.

109. **Changed**—Transformed. His head and face have been changed into a donkey's. See III. ii. 16, 17 where Puck explains what he has done. The effect, however, was to make it appear that Bottom had lost his own head and received another. The belief in the possibility and actuality of such transformations existed in Shakespeare's day and is here made a theme of amiable laughter. Such effects were popularly attributed to the agency of witches and papists. And some old books describe methods by which (as was supposed) men's heads could be changed into those of asses or horses. And one of the stories of Dr. Faustus (who had sold his soul to the devil in return for the power of witchcraft) tells of his causing a company of guests to have asses' heads, which however after they left resumed their natural shape. Shakespeare was thus probably not the first to make this representation

on the stage. In Albertus Magnus' work on the *Secrets of Nature* he tells all that was required for stage effect in a complete transformation: Take up the covering of an ass and anoint the man on his head.

It may be recalled that Milton (in whom all learning was harmonised) in his ethical masque described the effects of Comus' potion as a transformation of the countenance (which is the 'express resemblance' of Divinity). He had in view Homer's legend of Circe (the mother of Comus), who entirely transformed her victims, though they retained intelligence and the consciousness of their fall. In his imputation to Comus' victims of loss of intelligence and transformation simply of face it is legitimate to believe that he derived from his study of the flimsy material of this play the mould into which he poured the molten gold of his moral and poetic genius. In the verse which describes them as boasting of improved comeliness, it is at least possible that he remembered Bottom—

> Soon as the potion works their human count'nance
> The express resemblance of the gods, is changed
> Into some brutish form of wolf or bear,
> Of ounce, or tiger, hog or bearded goat—
> All other parts remaining as they were—
> And they, so perfect is their misery,
> Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
> But boast themselves more comely than before,
> And all their friends and native home forget
> To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty. (Verses 68—77.)

110. **What do**.....An impatient angry answer.

You see an ass-head of your own—This does not mean that Bottom is conscious of the transformation, though the term 'ass-head' suits the circumstances. The phrase seems to have been a familiar way of saying: Am I a greater ass (*i.e.*, fool) than yourself? Pinkerton is quoted. "The phrase is a trite vulgarism when a person expresses a foolish amazement at some trifling oddity in another's dress or the like."

111. **Bless thee**.....An often quoted sentence. The exclamation 'bless thee' seems propitiatory as if Quince were afraid. Preternatural agency is felt to be at work.

Translated—Metamorphosed.

113. **Ass**—A fool: the ordinary metaphor. Bottom does not know the propriety of the word.

Fright—Frighten. Bottom supposes that there is a conspiracy of his companions against him on account of his

superiority. They (he thinks) want him to run away. But he will do the opposite. He will stay, and sing loud to show his courage (and wake Titania to suit Puck and Oberon!)

117. **Ousel**—Now called, black-bird. Another name was merle (Lat. *merula.*) Technically it was called *turdus merula*, *i.e.*, the black-bird thrush. Shakespeare's own spelling is *woosell*; another form was, owsell; from Anglo-Saxon *osle*,—the lengthening of the first vowel being due to the loss of a nasal consonant.

118. **Orange-tawny**—The black-bird has a bright yellow bill or beak. See above I. ii. 85.

119. **Throstle**—The thrush or mavis. Technically the *turdus musicus* or song-thrush. The form is ancient; Middle English *throstel*: Anglo-Saxon *throstle* (a full dissyllable); and is still used. Another form was *throshel* the immediate diminutive of 'thrush.' Next to the nightingale the thrush is the sweetest English warbler.

120. **With little quill**—For 'and' of the folios the quartos have 'with' which expresses the sense. 'And' is often used by rustics for 'with' and may have been introduced here because 'with' occurs twice already. 'Quill' ordinarily means feather, especially the feather of a goose; and secondly, the pen made therefrom. Probably the feather was so named from its tapering point (Skeat). The word was also used for a bobbin or reed to spin yarn on; and for the peg of a cask. Probably it was originally the cone-shaped nine-pin used in the game of kails (or kayles); also spelt *keyle*; from Dutch *kegel*: in Old French *quille*. Probably in the text the meaning is beak or bill, with a secondary reference to the song that passes there-through. The description of the 'wren' would thus be parallel to that of the 'ousel.' The whole of Bottom's song refers to the music of birds; but Mr. Furness' abrupt explanation "of course quill here means pipe or note" as if quill could mean 'throat' requires explanation. The wren is a very small bird and everything about it is 'little.'

121. **Angel**—Titania is so charmed with the sound she hears (Bottom's singing) that she imagines an angel is nigh. The juice has touched her hearing as well as her sight.

122. **Finch**—Probably the chaf-finch, a bird which comes to the barn door to eat chaff; more remarkable for its colour than its song. In this second stanza less musical birds are specified, though the lark's shrill song is famous.

123. **Plain-song**—Whose song is without variations; alluding to the monotonous uniform cry of the cuckoo. This at least is Bottom's meaning though some editors give an

elaborate meaning to 'plain-song.' The word was opposed to 'prick-song' or written music where variations were specified. These variations were known as the 'descant,' and Milton specifies the "amorous descant" of the musically-gifted nightingale.

124. **Whose note**—Referring to the word 'cuckold' (in Fr. *coucou*) and the popular theories thereon regarding unfortunate husbands.

126. **For indeed**.....Bottom's own explanation of why no one ventures to contradict the cuckoo. According to what he deems profound wisdom the bird is not worth answering. Bottom is quite devoid of real humour as well as of imagination.

129. **Gentle mortal**—The subst. is the Fairy's description of man; the epithet is the usual complimentary one.

130. **Enamoured of**—In love with. The 'of' following verbal adjectives.

131. **Enthralled to**—In thrall (or thraldom) to. A much stronger phrase as the juice primarily affects the vision and works greatest results thereby. The preposition *to* indicates a state of subjection, while *by* would indicate an act. Cf. I. i. 136.

132. **And thy**.....The meaning is: And thy excellence is so great that (as I solemnly declare) I have at the very first sight fallen in love with you. **Virtue's force** = the power of thy virtue (*i.e.*, manliness, merit, worth). **Move** = induce or urge.

The reading of the folios, however, puts the last line (On the.....) third, *i.e.*, after 'mine ear...', which makes the love dependent on the music only: in which case 'doth move me' means, deeply affects me. The word 'view' which should follow the reference to the 'eye' is in favour of the first quarto, which, since Theobald, has been generally accepted. At the same time it is not likely that the change was due to accident, or that it was made without authority. According to the first quarto the sentence ends with a rhyming couplet (as Puck's last speech ends); according to the folios we have a quatrain or stanza in which only the second and fourth lines rhyme.

134. **Mistress**—Lady, used respectfully.

You should.....Bottom's reply is most appropriate to the quarto reading as he probably simply catches the idea in "love thee." His answer turns on this only, as is natural if it was Titania's last word.

135. **Reason and love**.....A truism which even Bottom can utter. Shakespeare may be referring to Lysander and

his other characters, or may be satirising some of his contemporaries. In any case this is the point which half the play illustrates.

136. **The more the pity**—All the more is it to be regretted. The phrase was familiar. 'The' is the instrumental case of the article.

137. **Honest**—Virtuous or honourable; as the word formerly meant.

Neighbours—A compound word: Anglo-Saxon *neah* = nigh, and *bur*, a husbandman, = boor. The word connoted moral relations of friendliness.

138. **Make them friends**—Reconcile them. Shakespeare may have some case in view, or may be merely expressing the desirable. Reason and love are personified.

Gleek—Jest cleverly and censorially. (Cf. *Henry V*, V. i. 78). Bottom is referring to the satirical observation he has just made; but he wishes Titania to understand that he is not repudiating her love. He is not in earnest in applying the contrast of reason and love to the present case. According to Jamieson's *Scottish Dictionary* the first meaning of *glaik* is the reflection of rays from a bright object, second the dazzling of one's eyes thereby, third a deception. He defines the verb as 'to trifle with.' Cowden Clarke refers 'gleek' to a game of cards where it meant gaining an advantage over, thence cheating; finally used for 'tauntingly jocose.' This may be correct and the Scotch *glaik* may be a different word.

139. **As wise**—Titania's acknowledgment of the 'gleeking' power and of the profundity of the above observation.

140. **Not so**—Bottom seems to regard his beauty as perfect.

If I had.....As the end of the sentence claims he has sufficient wit (or wisdom) for the business of life: but he acknowledges a perplexity (or lack of full knowledge) with regard to the wood he is in. 'Out of the wood' is a proverbial expression for out of difficulty; probably not so intended here. Note that 'wit' is the substantive here corresponding to 'wise.' Neither term had exactly its modern meaning. In both the main idea is of knowledge.

Serve mine own turn—Attend to my own interests or convenience.

144. **Whether thou wilt or no**—*Nolens volens.* Titania speaks with authority as a Queen. 'Whether' is practically a monosyllable, as usually.

145. **Of no common rate**—Of no ordinary (*i.e.*, of very high) rank (and also power).

146. **The summer still**—The summer with its array of flowers continually attends me, serving my interests. **State** = queenly dignity or magnificence. Fleay quotes from Nash's *Summer's Last Will* an allusion to Elizabeth "on whom all seasons prosperously attend," where the queen is credited with lengthening the summer. Nash is referring to the summer of 1592 which was exceptionally good.

148. **I'll give**—Thou shalt be treated as a person of rank in my kingdom.

149. **Jewels**—Used not as in India of artificially constructed ornaments, but of precious stones. Here, pearls. The word was in Old French a diminutive of 'joy.' Lat. *gaudium*.

150. **Pressed flowers**—A bed of flowers. Cf. Titania's own luxurious rest; II. i. 254.

151. **Will purge**.....Refine thy bodily grossness (*i.e.*, thickness, heaviness, corporeality). **So** = to such an extent.

152. **That thou**.....Shalt be able to fly through the air, and share the ethereal life of the fairies.

Compare with these two lines the moral and spiritual application of the idea in *Comus*, 458—

> Tell her [the soul] of things that no gross ear can hear,
> Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
> Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,
> The unpolluted temple of the mind,
> And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
> Till all be made immortal.

153. **Pease-blossom**..... This line which contains the names of the four fairies is wanting in the folios, which have the stage-direction: *Enter Pease-blossom, Cobweb, Moth, Mustard-seed and four fairies.* This would make eight fairies. Evidently the words *enter* and *and* have got misplaced. The text should contain the four names (with 'and' before the last); and the stage-direction should read (as in the quartos) *Enter four fairies*, not giving the names. The names are uttered by Titania as she summons the four attendants. The designations are taken from different parts of the slender inanimate world: Pease-blossom, a delicate flower; Cobweb, the thin spinning of the spider; Mote, a tiny particle seen in a sunbeam (or felt in the eye); Mustard-seed called in the New Testament the smallest of seeds (*Matthew*, XIII. 32) These are descriptions of attendants pretty much as 'cowslip' was the name or description of a pensioner.

Moth—Is an old spelling of mote (so also below V. i. 305). The letters *t*, *th* and also *th* (= *dh*), *d* were often confused,

and in the Teutonic languages had a tendency to pass into one another. 'Moth' is used for 'mote' unambiguously in *Love's Labour Lost*, IV. iii. 161, and *King John*, IV. i. 92. It is in inanimate Nature that Titania finds embodiments or symbols of her train.

159. **Hop**.....The two parts of the line have practically the same meaning. The fairies hopped (or leaped from point to point) in their gambols or frisky sports. '**Gambol**' has literal reference to leaping (Italian *gamba*, leg). 'Hop' usually means, leap on one leg.

160. **Apricocks**—The older spelling of apricots; from Portuguese *albricoque*; the modern spelling is from the French. The word is of Arabic origin.

Dewberries—Perhaps bramble-berries; the bramble being a thorny bush or shrub.

161. **Mulberries**—The fruit of the mulberry tree, a soft blackberry, resembling a bramble-berry. The first syllable represents the Latin *morus*, a mulberry tree.

162. **Humble-bees**—Humming bees; popularly called bum-bees: a special kind of bee of large size. The name is formed from *hummle* an old frequentative of hum.

163. **Night-tapers**—Candles.

Crop their waxen thighs—Remove from their limbs the pollen (resembling wax) which they are carrying (and then put it into the form of tapers). We fear 'crop' can only mean 'cut off'; but Titania is not conscious of the cruelty.

164. **Fiery glow-worm's eyes**—'Eyes' is used metaphorically for the source of the light, which is in the abdominal section. The glow-worm is a female larva whose light is intended to attract the winged male. 'Fiery' means luminous; cf. the name fire-fly. A fine reference to the glow-worm is in Shelley's familiar lyric, *The Skylark*—

> Like a glow-worm golden, in a dell of dew,
> Scattering unbeholden, its aërial hue.
> Amid the leaves and grass that hide it from the view.

A glow-worm in the grass resembles a bright eye gazing steadily. Herrick is quoted as saying similarly (in his, *To Julia*): "Her eyes the glow-worm lend thee."

165. **To have**—To show, guide.

166. **Painted**—Adorned, variegated (the work of Nature, not of Art).

167. **Fan**—Shade. Milton (*P.L.* II. 927) uses 'vans' (an alternative spelling) for wings or feathers, and it would here seem to be used for wings that enfold the eyelids. The

original meaning is, however, a winnowing instrument and the sense may be to beat off the moon-beams.

168. **Nod**—Bow respectfully. Refers to the movement of the head.

Courtesies—Low bows (Usually a peculiar movement of the body of which the bending of the knees is the central thing). In the text the word may have a more general meaning (including the Hail's that follow).

This nodding and curtseying is as comical as the hopping and gambolling above. But it suits the fairy mind.

Instead of the names of the Fairies the folios have First, Second, and Third Fairy. In what follows Moth seems to be absent or unnoticed.

173. **I cry**.....**mercy**—Bottom is rather overpowered, and uses this expression (which means I beg your pardon) without knowing well what he is saying or what he should say. "Your worship" is an expression similar to your lordship, your excellency: used now in magisterial courts; worship is from worthy. The full expression is 'I cry to your worships' mercy,' *i.e.*, I beg from your worships.

I beseech—He now addresses them individually.

176. **Desire you of**—Desire you in respect of: equivalent to our 'desire of you .....'

177. **If I cut** .....Cobwebs stop bleeding. Bottom is sufficiently witty to play on the names, and sufficiently prosaic to think only of practical ends.

180. **I pray you**—Bottom names Peascod and Squash as the parents of the little Pease-blossom. 'Squash' is a soft unripe peascod (Skeat). It is derived from the verb squash (ult. from Lat. *ex, cum, agere*). Cf. *Twelfth Night*, I. v. 165: "Not yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy as a squash is before 'tis a peascod.' Peascod is the pod or shell of the pea, but it may include the pea. Bottom is thinking of what he will be able to eat.

182. **You of more**—Here the folios have the modern phrase 'desire of you more,' but it is reckoned a mis-print. (Possibly it was an erroneous correction of the quartos).

186. **Patience**—Either in tolerating or surviving the Ox-beef raids; with an ironical touch since mustard is hot and supposed to cause choler and impatience. The phrase of the text occurs in the N. T., *Rev.*, II. 2. Many have sought to alter the text, unwarrantably.

Cowardly—In devouring so little a thing.

Ox-beef—The allusion is to the use of mustard as a seasoning to roast-beef.

187. **Of your house**—Of your family. So next line 'your kindred.' The mustard prepared for use is recognised as akin to the mustard-seed addressed.

188. **My eyes water**—The supposed effect of taking too much mustard. But there is, perhaps, a double reference; a conceit to the effect that sympathy with the injured mustard has made him weep in sorrow.

189. **You more**—(Not *your more* as in the later folios). Shakespeare may have deliberately altered the phrase (see lines 176, 182, where the idiom was fluctuating.

191. **Bower**—Chamber in the wood. The word frequently means arbour as here. Cf. the bower in *Paradise Lost*, IV. But dwelling-place is the root idea.

192. **The moon**..... There is danger of rain.

193. **And when she weeps weep**.....The reference is to the dewdrops which have been supposed to come from the moon or the stars. They are the moon's tears. Cf. *Macbeth*, III. 5. "Upon the corner of the moon there hangs a vaporous drop profound." (So in Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, IV. 4). Moore utters an old Celtic idea in the line: "At the midhour of night when the stars are weeping I fly." Cf. in COLERIDGE: Dewdrops are the gems of morning, but the tears of mournful eve."

194. **Lamenting**—A carrying out of the conceit.

Enforced—Violated.

195. **Tie up**—Titania fears that Bottom, being led to her special chamber, may utter some improper remark. She has not appreciated his comments on her followers.

Love's—Pope's emendation of 'lover's' in the early editions. The true reading is doubtful. The 'and' after 'tongue' in the Collier MS. may be correct; in which case the line is an Alexandrine, closing the stanza in Spenserian fashion. It is more probably a conjectural emendation. In any case if the line is metrical it is harsh to have 'love's tongue, bring' three heavily stressed syllables together in the middle of the line, and still more to read 'lover's' as a monosyllable. Still Shakespeare's lines are decasyllabic, and 'love' rather than 'lover' is the emphatic term of affection.

It is to be observed that Titania speaks shrewdly, not excitedly; and that she has not lost her wits except in the one point of fondness for Bottom.

SCENE II.

Here Pope began Scene IV; and Fleay would begin the fourth Act. This Scene continues from II. ii., and completes

the story of the trials of the lovers. Oberon and Puck are present throughout, though to the lovers invisible, and appearing as characters only when these are absent or asleep.

1. **If**—Whether.

Be awaked—Is awake or has been awaked. Probably 'awaked' is to be regarded as an adjective.

2. **Then**—And in that event.

3. **In extremity**—Extremely.

5. **Night-rule**—Apparently meaning night-sport, stirring conduct. It has been suggested that *-rule* in this compound is a form of -revel. In Middle English rule was written *reule* and revel, *revel*, both being dissyllables (the former from Lat. *regula*, the latter from Lat. *rebellare*). It is possible that with contraction or rapid pronunciation confusion might have taken place.

6. From this point the scene is in rhyme up to line 195. Again from line 348 where Puck returns rhyme is resumed.

7. **Close**—Closed, retired.

Consecrated—Which no other one was allowed to enter.

8. **Dull**..... When she had not the full exercise of her mind.

9. **Crew of patches**—A contemptuous phrase. 'Crew' (abbreviation of accrue, a reinforcement) was usually used in a bad sense or disrespectfully. 'Patches' may refer to the patched or mended garments of the rustics. (Cf. home-spuns above). The term was often applied to the professional fools.

Rude mechanicals—Uneducated working men. In elder days aristocrats despised 'mechanics.' In the *Lady of the Lake* FitzJames sneers at the 'poor mechanic.' (Gr. *mechane*).

10. **That**.....That obtain their living by working in the bazaars of Athens.

13. Puck's estimate of Bottom. The whole company were barren and Bottom was the barrenest. **Thick-skin** was a term of contempt for stupid people. The skin and the inner intelligence were supposed to be in inverse proportion to each other.

14. **Presented**, represented, acted. In the original text this word is followed by a comma, as is also 'sport'; thus making the construction doubtful.

15. **Scene**—Stage, which is the meaning of Lat. *scena*, Gr. *skene*.

Brake—Thicket or bush or hedge.

16. **At this advantage**—Alone and among the bushes. The advantage was Puck's; Bottom's the disadvantage.

17. **Nowl**—Or noll. A term for the head. Wright quotes from two fourteenth century versions of the Bible 'skulls' and

'nollis' as alternative translations for 'necks' (of thine enemies) (*Gen.*, XL. 8).

18. **Anon**.....Immediately his turn comes on.

Mimic—Actor, with special reference to the grotesqueness of the performance. The Lat. *mimicus* meant farcical; Gr. *mimos*, an actor or imitator. Cf. the compound *pantomime*. Examples of mimic in the sense of actor are found in Dekker and Herrick. Puck's use of **my** is sportive and slightly contemptuous.

20—24. Two similes are here given. Puck was so amused at the effects of his feat in the flight of the others that he has thus elaborately described it.

Fowler—One who endeavours to kill or catch wild fowl.

21. **Russet-pated choughs**—Grey-headed jack-daws. Russet in the poets denotes a dull colour, brown or grey or ashy. *E.g.*, Milton describes pastures or meadows as 'russet lawns and fallows grey,' *L'All.*, 71. It has been proved that the chough and daw were the same or very closely allied birds. Chough is applied still in S. W. England to a particular bird of the crow kind. And it was sometimes used as equivalent to rook or crow generally.

22. This line will apply to the jack-daw or to any kind of crow.

23. **Sever**—Separate (which is the same word etymologically); spread out.

24. **Fellows**—Companions. **His sight** = sight of him.

25. **Our stamp**—The stamp of Puck's foot, which may have been one of his ways of working mischief. The word occurs in the doggerel couplet expressive of fairy anger. "What have we here? Hempton, hamten, Here will I never more tread nor stampene." The 'our' is in contrast with the 'his' of the preceding line, and confirms the view that it is Puck's stamp, not the stampede of the company, that is meant. (Some editors change 'our' into 'one' or 'a' gratuitously). See v. 31 for another assertion of Puck's interference. Cf. also for fairy power, IV. i. 86.

Here ... ...**falls**—Either, repeatedly one falls, *i.e.*, several fall in succession, or one particular man falls repeatedly. The former gives the better sense.

26. **He**—The man that falls; *i.e.*, all who fall. The editors, however, explain 'he' as the opposite of the 'one,' as meaning 'another,' &c

Murder cries—Illustrating the panic and also perhaps the feeling that the 'falling' is due to some external cause, some power pursuing.

27. **Sense**—Absolute case.

Lost—May agree with sense, so that the meaning is 'their sense which was naturally weak being now entirely lost with their fear': or may agree with them of next line and **mean**, utterly bewildered.

28. **Made**—Manufactured or created, the reference being to inanimate nature as made. **Senseless**—Limits 'things' to the inanimate world, and 'things' confirms the meaning. With this passage cf. *Ven. and Ad.*, 146.

29-30. Explanatory of line 28. **Briers and thorns**—Briers are a special kind of thorns. The phrase is a frequent combination in the Bible; as *Isaiah*, VII. 23, 24.

Some sleeves—Some briers take hold of sleeves.

From yielders—The sentiment seems to be the converse of the saying, Fortune favours the brave. It seems best to regard 'things' as the subject and 'catch' as intransitive. It is possible that 'briers' is the subject and 'things' the object.

31. **I led**...Another assertion of Puck's power exercised over them. As undertaken above III. i. 96.

Distracted fear—Fear and distraction.

32. **Sweet Pyramus**—The 'sweet-faced man' (I. ii. 78). 'Sweet' may have been a conventional epithet of Pyramus, but it is used here with playful irony.

35. **Latched**—The word must of course mean anointed or streaked or bathed. There seems to have been two words latch. There is the subst. latch (as in latch key) used with reference to the fastening of a door, and the corresponding verb meaning to catch. And there is 'latch-pan' or dripping pan whose verb 'latch' means to drip or causatively to dribble. Twice Shakespeare uses the former word, but the latter is the term here. Skeat connects it with 'leak' and makes it mean to drop on, or simply moisten.

36. **Love-juice**—So called from its effects.

37. **Took**—Took advantage of him to carry out my purpose (*i.e.*, the latching). The word has various shades of meaning, cf. line 16.

40. **That when**...So that when he should wake she must necessarily be seen by him.

41. **Close**—Out of sight.

Same—The one we are referring to.

43-44. Demetrius is now in love with Hermia; but this she does not understand. The speech here is in reply to something said by Hermia before they come on the stage.

Him that = one that; viz., Demetrius.

44. **Breath**—Speech; breath being the material of which words are formed.

45. **Chide**—Reproach, censure; contrasted with 'curse,' l. 46.

Should—Ought to (as you deserve.)

46. **For thou**—By murdering Lysander (as she suspects.)

48. **O'er shoes in blood**—In blood up to the ankles; having waded in blood. So *Macbeth*, III. iv. 136. The metaphor in 'o'er shoes' is in various forms familiar.

Plunge in the deep—Go forward and plunge (over head and ears) in the deep flood (in the depths of guilt.) The figure is taken from a person going to bathe, who walks into the water and when he has reached a certain distance, plunges (or dives) beneath the surface. The following parallel expression is quoted from Heywood's Woman Killed with Kindness: come, come, let's in; once over shoes we are straight over head in.

The editors who are eager to amend Shakespeare substitute for 'the deep' knee-deep. This is the arithmetical calculation for a second murder, leaving room for one or two to follow; but too measured for the burning passion of Hermia. And it is a contradiction in terms for 'plunge' means, not 'wade,' but 'dive.' The 'correction' would make 'in' an adverb and require the stressing of the last four syllables. According to the text the stress is on 'plunge' and the transposition well suits the energy of Hermia's wrath.

49. **And kill me too**—This in the early editions is printed as the conclusion of the preceding line. In any case the words must stand alone; they are the explanation of the 'plunge.' Probably Shakespeare stopped in the middle of this line, and began a new line because of the abrupt change in the subject of Hermia's speech.

50. **The sun** .....Cf. quotation from *Troilus and Cressida*, page 152.

51. **Stolen**—Secretly crept.

52. **Sleeping Hermia**—His beloved Hermia while she was asleep.

53. **This whole**—That this solid. 'Whole' is unbroken, unpierced.

54. **Centre**—This may mean simply the centre of the earth through which the tunnel may be conceived to pass. In Shakespeare's time, however, centre was a technical term for the earth as a whole, which was deemed the centre round which the heavenly bodies revolved. As in *Paradise Lost*, I. 686, and often.

Creep—The term suggests furtive movement, in the same

way as 'stolen,' l. 51. It also indicates the slow cautious movement required in a difficult passage.

Displease—By invading his sphere. The moon passing through the centre while it is evening here would reach the antipodes while it was still noon-tide there. The fidelity of the moon (to whom the sun is brother, not spouse) consists in keeping her own place and lightening the darkness. To join the sun would be to renounce her duty and to violate nature. It seems to Hermia that the desertion of her by Lysander is as unnatural and improbable as the aberration of the moon would be.

Her brother's noon-tide—Her brother exercising his noon-tide sway.

55. **The Antipodes**—The people on the other side of the earth; so named because their feet are opposite to ours. Gr. *anti*, and *podes* plural of *pous*, foot. The term was formed by the Greeks. In England it is used to denote the Australians.

56. **But thou**—Otherwise than that thou.

57. **So**—*i.e.*, as thou lookest. 'Dead' used as a very strong epithet must mean either ghastly pale, or stiff, rigid. Cf. *2 Henry IV*, I. i. 72. "So dull, so dead in look, so woe-begone." The meaning 'pallid' is favoured by line 59 and still more by the contrast in line 60.

59. **Pierced**—A bold metaphor. Cf. *Luke*, II. 35.

60. **You, the murderer**—You who have murdered me.

Look—The folios have 'looks' which may be a misprint (*s* for *e*).

As bright .....Hermia looks bright with excitement, and Demetrius, who is still in love with her, sees the brightness magnified.

61. **As yonder**—Pointing to the planet (the morning star).

Glimmering sphere—The same use of the epithet as in II i. 77; the sphere in which the planet gleams. 'Glimmer' is a sort of frequentative (or weak causative) of gleam. The participle is applied (here and above) not to the source of the light, but to the region it shines in. 'Sphere' in the Ptolemaic usage is strictly the orbit (third of the ten) in which the planet moves; but the word may be used in the more general sense thence derived, as when we say sphere of work, of life, of influence, &c.

62. **What's this**.....An impatient interruption. She desires not compliments but her lost love.

64. **I had rather**—The reading of the first quarto. The folios have I'de which may be for 'I should.'

66. **Maiden's patience**—The meekness which a maiden is expected to show.

Then—Seeing that such are your sentiments.

67. Be hereafter reckoned a wild animal.

68. **O once**.....A pleading sentence. O for once, and even for my sake (though you are killing me) speak the truth.

69. **Have**—The quarto reading. The folios have 'a,' a former substitute of have.

This line in the early editions ends with a mark of interrogation; the substitution of the comma is due to Capell, a doubtful emendation.

70. **Brave**—Ironical, since he was asleep.

Touch—Shakespeare's spelling is *tutch*. It is a particular use of touch, = exploit, achievement.

71. **Worm**—Referring to the kind deemed poisonous, and connoting contempt; often used of a snake (wrongly).

So much—As much as that, viz., kill when asleep.

72. **Adder**—Metaphorical: the description of Demetrius.

Doubler tongue—Referring to a snake's forked tongue, wrongly thought to be the seat of the poison.

73. **Than thine**—Referring to moral duplicity; making love and at the same time injuring.

Never adder stung—No adder ever stung (*i.e.*, bit). Adder originally began with *n* (A.S. *naedre*). The *n* got attached to the indef. article. So orange, &c.

74. **Misprised**—Due to misapprehension. The noun misprision (Fr. *mesprison*) is from Lat. *prehensio*. Misprised is here used as a kindred word. The ordinary misprise (occurring in *As You Like It*, I. i. 177) is a different word; akin to prize (Fr. *mespriser*).

75. **I am**.....Demetrius finding that his silence regarding Lysander is increasing Hermia's antagonism to him now states the fact.

78. **Therefore**—In return or in reward for doing so.

79. **A privilege**...A special boon, viz., never . . .; [and therefore never to be chidden again by her]. The pause after 'privilege' allows the transposition of stress in 'never.'

80. **And from**...She has got the information she wanted, and thereupon leaves, uttering the most stinging language. 'Hated' is meant to describe the person as much as the 'presence.'

Part I so—I thus depart. The 'so' is wanting in the early editions (a compositor's mistake owing probably to the following 'see'). Mr. Furness prefers to put the semi-colon after 'I' and to connect 'so' with next line. Similarly in line 66 he would connect 'then' with the following line.

82. **There is**...She cannot be followed: it is of no use to try to follow.

Vein—Cf. 'mood,' l. 74.

84. **So**..The heaviness of sorrow is increased by want of sleep. 'So' may mean "I find that." It cannot mean 'since' (Deighton) since it introduces a principal sentence, dependence on the preceding line being prevented both by the full stop and the therefore. Heaviness is a term used for grief, so that 'sorrow's heaviness' is simply 'sorrow.'

85. **For debt**...Sleep is under obligations to sorrow; it being nature's plan that sleep should alleviate sorrow. Cf. *2 Henry IV.* III. 1, 'gentle sleep, Nature's fond nurse,' and *Macbeth*, II. 2, 'balm of hurt minds.'

Bankrupt sleep—Referring to his being awake all night till now when the morning star is shining. Sleep would have paid its debt if it had come 'before midnight. Not having done so it has not paid its debt and is therefore bankrupt. The metaphor is a little far-fetched, but Shakespeare is found to be apt to refer to bankruptcy. The spelling in the early editions is 'bank-rout'—'rupt' being restored in days of latinising influences. Fr. *banque route*, Ital. *banca rotta*, Teutonic *banc* and Latin *rupta, rumpere*.

86. **In some slight measure**—In some small instalment, or proportion, as bankrupts pay.

87. **For his tender**—For the amount it will offer. 'Tender' is the same word as is used in the phrase 'legal tender' (*i.e.*, authorised coin). Fr. *tendre*, Lat. *tendere*, to stretch out. As sleep is personified in this passage 'his' may be regarded as the regular masculine.

Lie down—A stage-direction, given in the imperative probably because the MS. from which the text was printed was a stage-copy. If it was for general information the direction would be *lies down*.

88-89—91. Oberon has discovered Puck's mistake (in anointing Lysander instead of Demetrius) and tells the necessary consequence thereof.

Misprision—Mistake. See on line 74. **Of** = out of, from.

91. **Some true love turned**—The turning of some true love (*i.e.*, reversal, turning to the opposite). Note that this phrase is the subject to "must ensue."

Not a false.....Not the turning true of a false love. 'False' is here put as the opposite of 'true' rather than as a correct description of Demetrius.

Hanmer's emendation in this line of 'false' for 'and' after the first 'turned' shows (as many emendations do) utter ab-

sence of rhythmical instinct. The varying construction of 'turned' is according to the manner and art of poets; the first 'turned' being stressed and charged with meaning, the second little more than a copula.

92-93. The construction in Puck's reply is not very obvious. It is clear that he puts the blame on fate, or overruling destiny. Then from the evil effect in the present case he proceeds to describe in exaggerated form the baneful influences of Fate on life. That a true love should become false is what fate usually brings about. There are a million failures for one case of perfect fidelity.

That—Probably, so that, with this result that. Furness gives 'in that' as the equivalent.

One man.....Absolute case; while one man holds troth.

Confounding oath on oath—Violating one oath after another. Confound was a strong term often meaning to destroy.

94. **About**—Etymologically *on-by-outward*, must here mean = 'everywhere through the wood.'

95. **Look thou**—See that thou. Spoken imperatively.

96. **All fancy sick**—Quite love-sick. All = altogether.

Cheer—Look, countenance; according to the original meaning; O.F. *chere*, Low Lat. *cara*.

97. Explanation of the paleness. Love-sick she sighs and with each sigh loses blood. So in *2 Henry VI*, III. ii. 63, sighs are called "blood-drinking" and in *3 Henry VI*, IV. iv. 23 blood-sucking. Such was a popular idea. **Fresh** means healthy—the root application having been to running (not stagnant) water. **Costs**, because sighing and not separate sighs is in mind.

98. **Illusion**—A leading light or other device. An 'illusion' is something seen and followed, but which turns out to be different from what was expected; as in the case of mirage. Anything Hermia would mistake for her lover or his path would be an illusion to her.

99. **Against she doth appear**—Against (in view of, in anticipation of) her appearing. [I'll **charm**, as you ought to have done]. In this line the folios have 'doth,' the quartos 'do' (subjunctive).

101. **Swifter than**...The Tartars or Mongolian hordes of Central Asia were famous for archery. Their skill was shown in swiftness, accuracy of aim, and skill in shooting behind while in flight. Properly, Tatars.

102-3. As above II. i. 165—7.

104. **Apple**—The round ball of the eye, named from its

resemblance in shape to an apple. The word occurs in the Bible, *e.g.*, *Psalms*, XVII. 8.

105. **Love**—The lady he ought to but does not love.

106. **Let her**...As above, line 61, Hermia appeared to shine.

108. **By**—Near.

109. **Remedy**—He was distressed by the conduct of Hermia. Let him ask healing from Helena.

110. **Captain**...Chief, according to the older meaning of the word. (Lat. *Caput*).

112. **Mistook**—Mistaken.

113. **Pleading**...Making love to; entreating to be received as a lover. A **lover's fee** was supposed to consist in kisses. (So in the *Lady of the Lake*, VI. 7). An old Ballad makes a maiden's fee three kisses.

114. **Fond pageant**—Silly exhibition (as Lysander is endeavouring to kiss). Cf. 'noise,' line 116. 'Pageant' was a theatrical word used in connection with the old 'mysteries,' and it continued to be used of external shows.

118. **Two at once**—Both Lysander and Demetrius will woo Helena.

119. **Alone**—Unique.

121. **Preposterously**—The same idea as in 'alone' but stronger; what is contrary to the usual course of nature. The etymological meaning is invertedly, or with the hinder part in front. (Lat. *prae, post*). Puck is illustrating his own humours.

122—7. Note that this and the following speech are stanzas of the form used in *Venus and Adonis*.

122. **Should, should**—These two 'shoulds' illustrate the subtlety of, and difficulty of explaining, this word. The meaning is very little different from "why do you think that I woo in scorn." The first 'should' suggests 'what reason can there be for your thinking'? The second 'should' according to Abbott is used because the following words express an idea not due to the speaker. Mr. Furness' idea that something of the idea of 'ought to' belongs to it is quite untenable, as the want of stress on the syllable may sufficiently prove.

123. **Come**—As in the quartos. The folios have 'comes.' It is difficult to distinguish scorn and derision (mockery and mocking laughter).

124. **Vows**—Furness regards this as subject to 'appears.' Abbott takes it as nom. absolute.

125. **In their nativity**—From the weeping that accompanies their birth (as in travail).

All truth appears—Are shown to be entirely true. The

meaning is proved by line 127. Grammatically it is doubtful whether truth is subject or predicate.

127. **Badge of faith**—The tears. So in Sonnet 44, 14. The metaphor is derived from the badges worn by liveried servants which guaranteed their messages, &c.

128. **Advance**—Exalt. The word often bore the sense of elevate though the root-meaning is move forward (Lat. *ad. ante*).

129. **When truth**...As indicated in the following lines Helena is thinking of the conflict, and mutual destruction, of his two sets of vows.

O devilish-holy—Vows are sacred, but false vows are wicked and hence the conflict of false vows has this awful character.

130. **Are Hermia's**—Belong to her by right. **Give o'er**, abandon.

131. **Will nothing weigh**—There seems a play on 'nothing' here. The meaning will be: the equality of the weights will prevent movement of the scales and thus give no result; or, the things you weigh are both nothing since they are false. These two meanings seem indicated in line 133.

133. **Even**—Evenly-balanced, equal.

Light as tales—Unsubstantial as idle tales (without truth and therefore without weight). Tales are contrasted with truths in *Ant. and Cleop*, II. ii. 136. The use of the word 'tale' was familiar and various. In *Psalms* XC, we spend our years as a tale that is told. So Shakespeare compares life to a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. (*Macbeth*, V. v.). Tale as the name of a narrative poem founded on fact is modern.

135. **Nor none**.....**now you**—And none...now that you...

137. Demetrius has awaked at the mention of his name, and the effect of the charm is instantly revealed.

Nymph—The nymphs were ideally beautiful.

138. **Eyne**—The eyes are in each case referred to first, as they are the first thing into which the man looks. Cf. Romeo's description of Juliet's eyes. *R. and J.*, II. ii.

139. **Crystal is muddy**—*I.e.*, in comparison: so incomparably greater is the brightness of her eyes. *Krustallos* was the Greek for ice.

Ripe in show—Red in appearance—given as the completion of the predicate, grow.

140. **Kissing**—Because the lips meet, touching each other, as cherries in contact.

Cherries—Metaphor, expressive mainly of colour.

Tempting—Ripe cherries tempt to pluck and eat.

141. **Congealed white**—Frozen object of whiteness, viz., the snow-covering of the lofty Taurus mountains. White is used as a subst. Taurus is a familiar classic name of a range of mountains in Asia Minor, more particularly the part of the range separating Cilicia from Phrygia and Pamphylia.

142. **Fanned with**.....The cold eastern wind is supposed to render the snow perfectly white. The figure is taken from the winnowing fan which separates chaff and corn. Here the wind removes everything that is not pure snow and perfectly cold. So in *Winter's Tale*, IV. iv. 375, where 'bolted' means sifted and the 'northern blasts' are specified.

Turns to a crow—Becomes black in comparison: the same idea as in line 139. Hyperbole.

143. **When thou**.....It is her hand that is perfectly white making the snow seem black.

144. **Princess of pure white**—Demetrius desires to kiss (the back of) her hand. In making the request he flatteringly describes it as the princess (or very highest perfection to be found) of pure white. Absolute white may be regarded as the perfection of colour as well as the emblem of purity. 'Prince' or 'princess' (Lat. *princeps*, taking the first place) may be metaphorically used to describe supreme excellence. Compare the uses of 'queen.' With the sentiment, cf. 'the white wonder of dear Juliet's hand.' *R. and J.*, III. iii. 37.

Seal of bliss—Seal is possibly used, not as confirming a past transaction, but as affording a pledge or assurance. The term is here used in anticipation of his being allowed to kiss the hand, or in the hope of his receiving the hand in marriage. It is the giving of the hand that will be the seal of bliss.

145. **Spite hell**—Cf. on Hermia's lips, I. i. 138, 140.

All are—The reading of the quartos, instead of the 'are all' of the folios. The latter is better.

146. **To set against**.....To make fun of me. 'Set' may have something of the idea of 'conspire.' Cf. line 150; and the expression 'a dead set against' one.

147. **Civil, knew courtesy**—Both expressions refer to good breeding, or the manners of the best society. 'Courtesy' is, originally, the manner at Court.

148. **Thus much injury**—So much insulting wrong.

150. **But you**.....Without your combining to mock (as well as hate) me. The expression 'in souls' has produced a long list of conjectural emendations. It is certainly not Modern English, but it has to be accepted. It seems formed after the analogy of the biblical phrase, 'though the wicked

join hand in hand.' Joining in hands would refer to common action; joining in souls to common scheming. Cf. *unanimous*.

151. **Men**—True men. **Show**—Outward form.

153. **Gentle**—High-born, delicately reared.

154. **Superpraise my parts**—Overpraise my excellences. Parts does not mean parts of the body (eyes, lips, hands), but beauty, attractiveness. As applied to a man it means talents, intellectual abilities.

155. **With your hearts**—In your hearts; so that the praise is insincere. The preposition 'with' suggests that Shakespeare is thinking of the heart as the organ or instrument rather than the seat of feeling.

156. **Rivals**—Contending suitors. Originally the term meant near neighbours, living beside the same stream (Lat. *rivus* a stream).

157. **Rivals to**—Competitors in (mocking, &c.)

158. **Trim exploit**—Equivalent to 'brave touch,' line 70. Both trim and brave are primarily applicable to fine or showy dress. The adjective trim is from the verb (meaning, to put in order), and is said to be generally ironical in Shakespeare.

158. **Conjure up**—Summon, as the magicians summon spirits.

Poor—Helpless, unfortunate.

159. **None of noble sort**—No true or noble gentlemen. Cf. line 151. 'Sort' and 'quality' were often used for degree or rank.

Offend—Injure. Offend is the opposite of defend. The term as used in the New Testament means "cause to stumble."

160. **Extort**—By cruelty exhaust. Lit. twist out. Cf. lines 65-66.

161. **All to**—Simply to make sport for yourselves.

163. **This you**.... You know that I know your love..... You cannot deny it.

165. **Part**—Share. They both loved her, and may be said to have had shares in her love. So Lysander proposes to hand over his share or partnership as if thereby he could increase Demetrius' share or possession in her love. By an exchange of parts (or shares or rights) he suggests that each may attain to the undivided love of one lady. Hermia's love and also Helena's are described as affairs in which they both had co-operative shares; and the proposal is that, instead of having two halves each, each should obtain one whole. The words 'good will,' 'part,' 'yield up,' 'bequeath' seem all taken from business.

168. **Never**—A truth, since such exchange is an impos-

sibility; but Helena does not perceive that Lysander is serious.

Mockers waste.....**idle breath**—Idle = ineffectual. Waste idle breath = speak utterly in vain. Cf. TENNYSON, *In Memoriam*, 120—

> "I trust I have not wasted breath; I think we are not wholly brain, Magnetic mockeries."

169. Demetrius' proposal is of course the reverse of Lysander's. They both agree to give up parts, but they both want the same new business; *i.e.*, they both want Helena.

I will none—I will have none of her (*i.e.*, nothing to do with her). The phrase 'none of' is frequent in Elizabethan writers, as *Twelfth Night*, I. iii. 113, "She will none of me." 'None' thus equals 'no one thing.'

171. **My heart**... His affection was given to her for a brief time. This is compared to the visit of a guest as distinguished from the companionship of a life.

To her—The ordinary prep. with sojourn is 'with' and here Johnson, followed by many editors, have changed the text according to their notions of grammar. The line is condensed. 'To her' has the double force of a visit *to* her and a brief stay *with* her. It might be argued that 'sojourn' retains something of the force of the kindred word 'journey' as the associate word pilgrim does. The distance between the prep. and the verb adds to the poets' liberty.

Guest-wise—In the manner of a guest, or visitor entertained; 'wise' is an old word preserved in otherwise.

Sojourned—Stayed for a limited time. Same root as journey; Lat. *dies*, a day.

172. **Home**—To its permanent residence. Cf. *Sonnet*, 109, 5, 6.

173. **Helen**—This word is in the first quarto though absent in the later editions. The propriety depends on whether Lysander's words are spoken imploringly to the lady, or uttered in direct reply to Lysander. The word 'Helen' which is necessary to make up the full line may have been omitted under the latter impression of the passage; or Shakespeare may have struck it out deeming the completeness of the line sufficiently accounted for by the break.

[It is strange that Mr. Furness should think that the retention of Helen implies accenting the second syllable; a very great misconception of metrical art].

174. **Disparage** .....**faith**—Do not make light of my deep

loyalty. The strength of this answer favours the view that 'Helen' should be retained in the preceding line.

175. **To**—Not the same as 'at'; in Latin, *cum* = with; equivalent to, involving thy peril.

Aby—The reading of the first quarto is 'aby,' of the other editions 'abide.' 'Aby' is an old word, found in Spenser, but afterwards corrupted into 'abide,' and so usually found in Shakespeare; a compound of 'buy' and meaning 'pay for' (Middle English *abyen*). It occurs again, line 335, while 'buy' is found, 426. The ordinary word 'abide' is quite distinct.

176. **Thy dear**—Thine one beloved.

177—180. The conceit of these four lines (that the ear has more power when the eye is inactive) is based on the scientific fact that the loss of one sense is often compensated for by a quickening or strengthening of other faculties. "Oft when one sense is suppressed, it but retires into the rest." The reason, however, why one hears better in the dark is simply the stillness of the night.

Function—Activity or exercise of seeing.

178. **More quick of apprehension**—Readier to take in sounds.

179. **Wherein**—A compound, conjunctive relative; in that respect wherein; or, by the same action by which.

180. **Double recompense**—Not merely an equivalent, but twice as much. Hermia is blessing the benignant night.

181. **Thou art**.....It is not by mine eye that thou hast been found.

182. **Thy sound**.....I heard thy voice (speaking to some one else). But the folios have 'that' which means that she heard the utterance of the name, line 169; a better reading.

183. **Unkindly**—May be either in the ordinary sense, or with an older meaning, unnaturally or contrary to thy own nature. 'Kindly' was originally formed from the substantive. All forms are derived from 'kin.'

184. **He**..... **whom**—The man.....whom. A general observation meant to include the case of the speaker.

Love doth press—An acknowledgment of the arbitrary power and resistless authority of love.

185. Hermia is astonished to hear that love urged him away from her.

186. **Lysander's love**—By a sudden turn of thought 'love' is here used for the concrete. Lysander's love....., viz., fair Helena. This, which is the only possible construction of the text, is not quite satisfactory as the 'that' of the parenthetical clause must refer to the passion of love (not Helena the

object). Lysander might semi-playfully make a transition in the middle of his utterance. **Bide** is the older verb, now replaced by 'abide.'

187. **Engilds**—Adorns (as with golden lustre).

188. **Yon fiery oes and eyes**—Pointing to the stars. The letter o was used as the name of any circular object, but especially of bright round spangles of shining metal. (See BACON, *Essays*, 37). 'Eyes' is metaphorically used of sources of light (which resemble bright round eyes). (See above I. i. 183, III. i. 157).

189. **This**—Apparently, his love of Helena, or possibly, the fact of her having to seek him; but the meaning is not clear and the sentence is weak.

191. Helena sees that Hermia does not take Lysander seriously, and maintains a loving manner towards Lysander. She accordingly rushes to the conclusion that Hermia also is in league against her.

192. **Confederacy**—See above lines 146, 150.

194. **Fashion**—Shape, organise. Fashion is distinguished from form as the temporary from the permanent. Fashion is, through Old French, the alternative form of faction. (Lat. *factio*, making, *facere*, make). Cf. *Luke*, IX. 29.

False—Because involving insincerity, pretence of affection; deceptive.

In spite of me—In my despite. Not the modern phrase. Cf. line 145.

195. **Injurious**—Insulting, wronging. Note that here rhyme ceases up to line 340.

196. **Bait**—Harass, worry; as in the expressions bull-baiting, bear-baiting. Bait is a causative of bite.

Derision—Four syllables.

198—214. A beautiful description of the trustful friendship of young girls.

Counsel—Mutual plans, confidings. See I. i. 216.

199. **Sisters' vows**—Vows of friendships to be to each other as sisters.

200. **Chid the hasty-footed time**—Expressing our keen regret that the day was done, or the hours of intercourse ended. Time is here (as generally in the poets) personified and represented as a swift runner. The use of the term 'chid' is in accordance with the personification.

201. **O! is all**—The lacking syllable has to be made up by lengthening the voice on the O! Helena for a moment breaks down and sobs (as we may suppose). The later folios inserted 'and' before 'it.'

Forgot—Forgotten. So chid (for chidden). Poets prefer shorter forms.

202. **All**.....Prolonging the pathos. **Childhood innocence** is the simplicity and unselfishness of childhood.

203. **Two artificial gods**—This expression requires explanation. 'Artificial' may be used either actively or passively, in either case referring to skilled handiwork. It is supposed to be *active* here, with reference to the making of the flowers together. Similarly 'gods' is supposed to describe the 'creative' energy involved in the same thing. But this seems overdone. Might not Shakespeare have tempered the comparison by calling them goddesses? Other conjectures are possible. Shakespeare may have had in view some well-known image (in painting, or sculpture or other device) representing two gods as thus closely associated, or some mythological story; in which case 'artificial' would be passive. Or Helena may have deemed them like gods on account of supernatural love and happiness. We might have thus rather expected 'angels'; but the girls belonged to Greece where gods abounded.

204. **Needles**—Pronounced as a monosyllable. There was an alternative form *neeld* both in Middle and Elizabethan English. That is to say, the *l* was sounded sometimes before, sometimes after the *d*. But the word was also pronounced *neel*, for in an old play it rhymes with feel. The Scandinavian form is *nal;* and Dutch has *naald* (although the Ger. is *nadel*). The ultimate root is *na*, to sew; Aryan, *sna*. Shakespeare in writing the passage had in his mind a familiar pronunciation which cannot now be confidently stated. The modern spelling was, however, being accepted as the literary form.

Flower—The device sewed on the sampler; the shape wrought in embroidery.

205. **Sampler**—A sheet of canvas or cloth given to girls at school to work figures on. This they kept thereafter as a sample for subsequent copying. The word is the same as 'exemplar'; Fr. *exemplaire* (from Lat. *exemplum*).

Cushion—Chairs were not yet in general use in Shakespeare's time, still less in ancient Greece. Cushion (and also quilt) is ultimately from Lat. *culcita*, a mattress or cushion.

206. **Warbling of**—Singing bird-like. Milton uses the same word (without the prep.) of Shakespeare himself; "warble his native wood-notes wild," *L'Allegro*, 134.

In one key—The same musical pitch.

207. A summary: **hands** referring to sewing, **sides** to sitting, **voices** to singing, **minds** to unity of work and aim.

208. **Incorporate**—Grown into one, fused together. The

term is used of marriage in *R. and J.*, Act II, last line. Tennyson utilises the word in *In Memoriam* "grow incorporate into thee."

In this line the middle vowel of incorporate is elided, and there is also a double ending; marks of a later revision.

The above passage may be read as implying either that the two girls sitting on one cushion with separate samplers in their hands wrought these samplers after one pattern, both by their needles forming the same kind of flower; or, that they had only one sampler between them and that each sewed parts of the flower (or if the flower was multiplied each wrought her share).

209. **Double cherry**—Two cherries which have grown on one stem in close contact and now adhere.

Seeming parted—Apparently separate.

210. **An union in partition**—A sort of contradiction in terms. Cf. the phrase in Tennyson's Princess "like in difference." Partition is division or a dividing line. The folios read *a* union; the quartos *an* union. There may be here a recollection of the heraldic use of 'partition.' See on 214.

211. **Lovely berries**—Such as the cherries. The loveliness is due to the friendship as much as to youth and beauty.

Moulded.....Formed on one stalk. Moulded suggests beauty of form.

212. **With two** .....Cf. above II. ii. 42—50.

213. **Two of the first**—Two bodies. First = first-mentioned.

Like coats in heraldry.....Frequently on the same shield two coats-of-arms, those of husband and wife, were quartered—the husband's on the right side, the wife's on the left. Surmounting them was one crest, the husband's. Neither crest nor helmet belonged to woman (though the use of female crests has come in from German example). Other illustrations may be found in heraldry, but this is probably what was in Shakespeare's view; though the case of two coats separately inherited and conjoined in one shield might also be applicable. (On the Continent the two coats instead of being quartered on different sides of one shield are kept as separate shields). 'Herald' is from the Old High German *hari-wald*, lit. army-strength.

214. **Due but to one**—This expression has probably a double application—two bodies due to one heart; two coats-of-arms belonging to one lord. But to one = to one only.

Crowned with one crest—The crest (which is the ornament of the helmet) is in armorial bearings placed above, as crown-

ing, the heart-shaped shield. Crowned is ult. from Latin *corona*, a wreath; hence the circular crown placed on the head. 'Crest' primarily referred to a bird's tuft.

In the above passage it is possible that there is more of heraldic reference than is involved in the simile in line 213. It is said that 'two of the first' is a heraldic expression used in reference to colour (the first being the colour of the field or ground, and the second, third, &c., being the colours next specified). 'Partition' is also a term used in heraldry and here would mean the perpendicular line down the centre separating the right and left coats. Thus 'union in partition' would describe the same heraldic conditions, and thus heraldry may have suggested the phrase. So also the 'double-cherry seeming parted' may have been partly suggested by something pictorial.

The explanation of 'of the first' as referring to colour has no point here; and some other meaning is possible. It is also to be noted that 'like' is Theobald's emendation (suggested to him by a friend Martin Folks) of 'life' in the early editions.

215. **Rent**—Old form of rend. Coleridge may have remembered this line when he wrote in *Christabel* "Like cliffs that had been rent asunder. They stood apart." **Ancient** = of long standing, as the word frequently meant.

217. **Maidenly**—Such as becomes a maiden.

218. **Our sex**—All women, sensitive for the honour of their sex.

219. **Injury**—Wrong, injustice.

220. **Amazed**—Bewildered (not simply surprised).

Passionate—The reading of the folios. In the quartos the word was wanting. The elision of the middle-syllable accords with Shakespeare's mature style.

225. **Even but now**—Only an instant ago. 'Even' (a monosyllable) strengthens the phrase.

226-27. Cf. above 137—144. Instead of 'perfect' we have now 'rare,' instead of 'crystal,' 'precious,' instead of perfect whiteness, 'celestial.'

229. **Deny your love**—Repudiate love towards you; deny that he loved you.

230. **Tender**—Offer, hold out to: **forsooth**—to be sure, an expression used scornfully; **affection**, love. The word was also used to denote mental state, of any kind.

231. **But by**...Except at your instigation.

Consent—A weaker expression, as if she felt the previous one unwarranted.

232. **In grace**—In favour with lovers.

233. **So hung upon**—Lovers are represented as hanging upon, *i.e.*, keeping close to, looking up to, or throwing their arms round the neck of their lady love.

234. **But** . But on the contrary most miserable in that I love without being loved in turn. This line is in the folios in parenthesis; the point of interrogation being after 'fortunate.' The point of interrogation should be omitted altogether.

235. **This**—The whole statement of the three preceding lines.

236. **This**—Her whole speech and attitude.

237. **Ay do persever**—Yes, do as you are doing, persist in it, pretend to be sad and distressed. Persever is the same as persevere; it is accented on the middle syllable. **Counterfeit** is to imitate—used chiefly of false coin (Lat. *contra. factum*). Instead of Ay, do the first quarto has 'I do' which is a possible reading.

238. **Upon**—At or towards; in derision, of course.

239. **Sweet**—Sweet to them, bitter to her.

Hold . **up**—Do not let it stop, or go down.

240. **Well carried**—If well maintained.

Chronicled—Recorded in history.

241. **Have**—We should expect 'had'; but such irregularities were frequent.

242. **Argument**—Theme (of merriment).

244. **Absence**—The opposite of presence. Cf. lines 314—16.

246. **Love life soul**—A climax.

247. Helena endeavours to meet scorn with laughter. Hermia appeals to Lysander not to indulge in such scorn. Neither imagines that Lysander is in earnest.

248. Demetrius says if Hermia cannot by entreaty stop Lysander from addressing Helena he is able to do it by force.

249. Thou canst no more succeed by force than she by entreaty.

250. **Prayers**—This is Theobald's emendation of the original *praise*. The sense requires prayers, or prayings or some subst. derived from pray. It is possible that pray was here used as a noun.

251. **By my life**—A form of adjuration.

252 **That which I will lose**—My life which I am ready to surrender; will lose = will risk losing.

253. **To prove him false**—*i.e.*, by the issue of a combat. Lysander thus challenges Demetrius to fight a duel—the old method (according to the military code) of vindicating one's honour when accused of untruth. Often referred to in Scott's

poetry, as in the *Lady of the Lake*, V, where Fitzjames undertakes to "write the falsehood on his crest."

254. Demetrius addresses Helena.

255. **Withdraw**—*i.e.*, to a suitable spot. The challenge is urged.

256. Demetrius promptly accepts the challenge and bids Lysander follow him. Hermia again appeals to Lysander. **Whereto tends** = what is to be the end or upshot of.

257. **Ethiop**—Ethiopian; the word is used with reference to the dark complexion of Hermia. Lysander is now describing her with something of contempt. Cf. in *Romeo and Juliet*, I. v.—

> She hangs upon the cheek of night
> Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear.

In *Jeremiah*, XIII. 23, it is asked: can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?

Sir—The reading of the folios is sir; according to which Demetrius is addressing Lysander only. In the quartos instead of 'sir' there was he'ei (he will) according to which Demetrius began by addressing Hermia and then suddenly turned to taunt Lysander.

258-59. Demetrius represents Lysander as making a pretence of endeavouring to break away from Hermia (who has caught hold of him), and to follow him out to fight. **Take on** = make as if, pretend to.

259. **Come**—(And 'take' of line 259) are probably in the imperative.

Tame man—Coward.

Go—Demetrius thus in scorn or pity bids him go away; *i.e.*, releases him from his engagement to come and fight.

260. **Hang off**—Dont hang on.

Cat, burr—These words and 'serpent' of next line refer in separate ways to Hermia's clinging to Lysander. A burr is a prickly case containing the seed of a plant. It readily adheres to clothes. Similarly a cat by its claws and a serpent by twining attach themselves.

Let loose Or—Let go, otherwise.

261. **Shake** . . Cf. *Acts*, XXVIII., 4, 5.

Rude—Rough and ungentlemanly. Properly raw, uneducated, unrefined.

263. **Thy love!**—Am I, forsooth, thy love?

Out tawny Tartar—Be off thou dark-skinned savage. Tartar has reference, like Ethiop, to colour but mainly to the horror inspired by the Tartars who were popularly regarded as loathsome and half-fiendish barbarians.

264. **Loathed medicine, hated poison**—These metaphors mean that Hermia is as nauseous to him as any noxious drug. The first quarto has instead of poison 'potion' which is etymologically the same word. 'Medicine' is used of what is disagreeable.

265. Hermia puzzled asks Lysander whether or not he is jesting. Helena still expresses her belief that none of them is in earnest.

266. Referring to the duel.

267. **Your bond**—Binding document, inasmuch as he does not trust his word.

268 **Weak bond**—Demetrius implies that the said bond would be sure to hold him since even a weak bond holds him. Here there is a pun on the word bond which now means the lady's arms, and another taunt.

269-70. Lysander apologises for being held by the 'weak bond' by saying that he will not cast off Hermia at the risk of injuring her. Demetrius had implied that he did not really wish away from her.

271. The word 'hate' has pierced Hermia to the quick. She now realises that Lysander has ceased to love her.

272. **News**—Instead of this noun the Collier MS. has the verb 'means.'

274. **Erewhile**—Also whilere; previously, before.

275. **Since night**—Since night-fall.

278. **Did desire**—Past tense describing the feelings with which he left her.

279. **Question**—Regarded as a monosyllable, or with the final syllable slurred. Mr. Furness would read 'question' as a tri-syllable and make the line an Alexandrine, which besides being metrically inadmissible is out of harmony with the abrupt rapid elliptic style of the passage.

280. **Nothing truer**—Perhaps a subordinate noun clause depending on 'be certain.'

281. **Juggler**—Cheater, deceiver. The word seems to be a tri-syllable, according to the Middle English pronunciation *jogelour*; O.F. *jogleor*, Lat. *joculator*; *jocus*

282. **Canker-blossom**—By another metaphor Helena is compared to the insect that preys on blossoms or flowers and destroys them. The blossom killed is Lysander's love. Canker in this compound is perhaps the verb. Lat. *cancer*, a crab. Cf. *Tempest*, I. 2. 415, 'beauty's canker.'

283-4. **Thief**—Cf. I. i 32, 36.

284. **Fine i' faith**—Cf. 'excellent,' I. 247.

285-6. Note the climax, the substantives becoming more

pointed and minute. **No touch of** = not the smallest quantity of.

286. **Tear**—Force me to utter.

Impatient—Uncontrollable, angry. Cf. lines 65, 66. This line exemplifies the form of antithesis and the figure of contrast.

288. **Counterfeit**—Referring either to the want of true womanliness as described 285-6; or to the unreality and insincerity of her friendship.

Puppet—Tool in the hands of others; with a reference to shortness of stature. O.F. *poupette*, a baby: Lat. *pupa*, a girl, a doll.

289. **That way goes the game**—That shows the kind of game she has been playing. That reveals the method by which she has succeeded in alienating Lysander from me.

290. **Compare**—The verb for the noun, as often in Shakespeare. Cf. 'beyond compare.'

291. **Urged**—Pressed as a recommendation.

292. **Personage**—Bodily figure. In the first occurrence the word is pronounced as a dissyllable with the middle vowel elided. Hermia utters this and the next line with mocking scorn.

294-5. She now addresses Helena directly in the same vein of semi-ironical mockery. **High** used on account of its double meaning.

Dwarfish—Ironical; what Helena is supposed to have represented.

296. **Painted maypole**—Contemptuous language. Maypole expresses tallness without corresponding breadth or strength. 'Painted,' as 'juggler' above, expresses insincerity, outward show of friendship without corresponding feeling of heart, or might refer to external decoration. The May-pole was a long pole prepared and set up in every village on May-day (1st May) in connection with the rejoicings of the season. Round this pole they danced and played. These poles were usually painted with various colours as well as adorned with flowers.

297-8. Hermia now reveals the Tartar element in her character. She threatens to tear out her supposed rival's eyes. **Nails** = finger-nails.

299. **Though you mock**—Referring to their speeches above; though you have been willing to practise mockery towards me do not allow violence. In making this appeal she styles them 'gentlemen.'

300. **Curst**—Shrewish. Properly, changed in natural

character and rendered violent or malevolent by witches or evil spirits. The phrase and the two following lines have all the same meaning. Helena claims to have the simplicity and harmlessness of an honest maiden. Fighting is therefore contrary to her nature.

301. **Shrewishness**—The quality of a shrew, *i.e.*, of one beshrewed or cursed; generally expressive of some malicious art, some mischievous skill.

305. **Match her**—*i.e.*, in fight.

Lower—The word is repeated from the preceding line. Hermia regards the innocent use of this word by Helena as a confirmation of her theory stated above 289—293.

307. **Evermore**—Ever.

308–10. Helena protests the truth and sincerity of her character (in answer to the taunts of lines 282, 296) asserting that she never, except in the matter of the flight from Athens, betrayed any secret.

310. **Stealth**—Stealing, secret withdrawal.

313. Another climax. **Spurn** = kick.

314. **So**—Provided that.

Quiet—May be adjective = unmolested; or adverb.

315. **Bear my folly back**—Her folly being a part of herself will be carried back with her.

316. Note the alliteration in folly, follow, further.

317. **Fond**—Combines the ideas of 'simple' and 'foolish.' Cf. I. 319.

322. Demetrius must outdo the assurance of Lysander; accordingly he will protect Helena though Lysander should join Hermia. He claims to be stronger than the two combined.

323. **Shrewd**—As above, mischievous, malicious.

324. A reminiscence of girlhood.

Vixen—Fem. of fox. Anglo-Saxon *fyxen*—the *o* being changed into *y* (or *i*) according to umlaut, (so from gold, gild, &c.,) and *x* being a new letter whose place was formerly supplied by *f* (which had both the voiced and unvoiced or soft and hard sounds). Vixen as applied to a woman indicated fierceness, virulence. This is the only survival of the feminine in *-en*.

325. **Be but little**—Is only a little person.

326. **'Little' again**—Cf. line 305, 289. Hermia is maniacal on this point which she deems the cause of the preference of Helena, and Helena unwittingly offends.

328. **Let me**—In order to strike her.

Dwarf minimus bead acorn—A succession of descriptions perhaps arranged in an anti-climax. 'Minimus' probably

means a human being of very small size, smaller than an ordinary dwarf; the word is the Latin superlative meaning 'least' and has the masc. ending. It is suggested that the use of it arose from the term *minim* in music, which is written in a diminutive form and formerly denoted the shortest note. It is supposed that bead refers to colour as well as size—beads having been at the time generally black. The smallness of the acorn is proverbial from its contrast with its development in the oak tree.

329. **Hindering knot-grass**—The knot-grass, a kind of grass with knots or joints in the stem, was popularly believed to prevent growth. It is often referred to by Elizabethan writers as thwarting the growth of children. Thus the smallness of Hermia is attributed to her being fed on this grass. A second meaning of the phrase is also applicable. The knot-grass being difficult to weed or cut impeded agricultural arrangements. So Hermia clinging to Lysander was hindering him from going with Demetrius.

330. **Officious**—Showing excess of duty or attention.

331. **In her**..... In behalf of her (*i.e.*, Helena) who.

333. **Intend**—Put forth. In the seventeenth century the word was generally used of keeping the mind intent on. The present meaning is recent. Latin *tendere*, stretch.

334. **Never so little show**—Even the very least display.

335. **Aby**—See line 175. **Holds**—Keeps hold of.

336-7. Lysander being now free renews the challenge. **Try** = decide by combat.

337. **Of thine or mine**—Whether thine or mine. This peculiar use of *of* is variously explained. It seems to be the same as in 'which of the two,' which of the two rights—thine or mine. Shakespeare has (*Tempest*, II. i. 28), Which, of he or Adrian, *i.e.*, which of the two, he or Adrian. So in Sidney's *Arcadia*, "who should be the former. .. of the black or the ill-apparelled knight," *i.e.*, which of the two, the black or should be first.

Most—Greatest.

338. Demetrius affects eagerness for the fray.

Cheek by jowl—Face by face, *i.e.*, side by side; a proverbial expression which doubtless arose when the latter was pronounced chowl (or chole). Jowl = jaw; formerly *chaw* and *chaul* or *chowel*; Middle English *chavel*; A.S. *ceafle*; derived from the verb chew (cr chaw).

339. **Coil**—Trouble. Of Celtic origin. Frequent in Shakespeare. **Long of**—Due to. A phrase now obsolete, though 'all along of' is a common provincialism still.

340. **Nay**...Helena having lost the protection of the men is drawing back in fear.

342. **Fray**—Scuffle. The word is an abbreviation of affray.

344. This line is wanting in the first folio. The omission is attributed to accident. But it seems to us not highly appropriate; and the existence of a triplet is very unusual. Shakespeare may have cancelled it later without caring to supply any stage-direction.

345. Oberon and Puck (see line 41) have been secretly watching and listening to this long controversy. Oberon, whose original plans have been spoiled, now begins to throw the blame on Puck.

Thy negligence—Due to thy negligence, *i.e.*, thy careless incautious discharge of duty. Oberon is accusing Puck not of neglect or omission of duty but of wrong-doing either through mistake or through wilfulness.

Still—Always, continually.

Mistakest—Intrans.; makest mistakes. So in line 347.

346. **Knaveries**—Mischievous tricks.

347. **King of shadows**—A majestic description of the sovereign of the fairy world; cf. at the end V. i. 409. The fairies as shadows are unsubstantial compared with man but not therefore necessarily unreal.

351. **Nointed**—Formerly an alternative form of anointed.

352. **Sort**—Fall out as arranged by fate (line 92). Lat. *sors*, lot, destiny.

353. **As**—Mr. Furness who regards this 'as' as equivalent to because, entirely separates it from the 'so far' of the preceding line. This we think illegitimate. Lines 352-3 are a couplet similar or parallel to the preceding couplet. 'So far ...that' is equivalent to 'to this extent.. viz., that.' 'So far ...as' is equivalent to 'inasmuch as' or 'in proportion as'; but the meaning is involved in the two conjunctions not in the last alone. 'So.. As' of lines 358-9 is the modern 'so...that.'

Puck, as a boast of independence, re-asserts his delight in things preposterous (lines 120-1).

355. **Robin**—Oberon giving new instructions uses this gratifying name.

Overcast—'With clouds and darkness.'

356. **Welkin**—Sky.

357. **Drooping fog**—Hanging thick mist. London is often in autumn or winter covered with fog so dense that one cannot see yards ahead.

Acheron—The underworld, hell. In classical mythology Acheron was one of the four rivers of Hades; "sad Acheron

of sorrow black and deep" (*P.L.*, II. 578); but the name (like that of Styx, the river of hate) was often used for the whole of Hell, as in *Comus* 605 where the grisly legions troop "under the sooty flag of Acheron." The editors suppose that Shakespeare mistook the river for a lake or pit, but Acheron was deemed a pit simply in the sense in which all hell was reckoned a pit or burning lake. Again, Acheron as the river of sorrow was specially associated with blackness, the emblem of mourning, as the quotation from *Milton* shows. In these references Shakespeare shows familiarity with the classical allusions of his time.

358. **Testy**—Ill-natured. Lit. heady or headstrong. O.F. *teste*, the head; Lat. *testa*, a potsherd, shell, skull.

359. **As**—That. This use of 'as' is habitual in *Bacon* as well as *Shakespeare*.

360—62. Methods or devices by which Puck might lead the one away from the other. In the darkness each not seeing the other they would make towards his counterfeit voice. Cf. above, II. i. 46; III. i. 100.

361. **Stir**. With resentment against the supposed insults of Lysander. Thus Demetrius would furiously pursue the voice.

364. **Death-counterfeiting sleep**—The resemblance of sleep to death is a frequent conceit of the poets; as in the beginning of Shelley's *Queen Mab*: How wonderful is Death, Death and his brother Sleep. Cf. *Macbeth*, II. iii. 81; *Cymbeline*, II. ii. 31.

365. **Leaden**—Heavy. The heaviness of the sleeper is transferred to the personified sleep.

Batty wings—Referring mainly to the fact that bats fly about at night, when sleep may be said to be hovering near. But there is an appropriateness also in the kind of wings belonging to bats. As sleep's legs are leaden, so his wings are leathern (not of light feathers).

366. **This herb**—Another herb in the possession of the Fairy King.

367. **Liquor**—Juice.

Virtuous property—Virtue, magic quality, special power. For this use of 'virtue,' cf. *Luke*, VIII. 16.

368. **With his might**—With the inherent power it possesses; referring to its magical or mysterious qualities.

His—Its. Formerly 'his' was the neuter as well as the masculine genitive.

369. **Wonted sight**—His former and ordinary power of seeing things naturally. The effect of the herb will be to

undo the effects of the former charm so that again Lysander will behold Hermia with admiration.

370. **Derision**—Mutual scorn.

371. **Will seem** . .. They will both remember their quarrel as one remembers an unpleasant dream. When they awake Lysander will love Hermia and Demetrius will love Helena; there will be no cause of quarrel, and their contention will have lost the appearance of reality.

Fruitless vision—The terms 'dream' and 'vision' were often combined as practically the same in meaning. See *Acts*, II. 17, and cf. *Comus*, 457, " in clear dream and solemn vision." 'Fruitless' means coming or leading to nothing. Note that vision and derision are pronounced with three and four syllables respectively.

372. **Wend**—Go. The present tense corresponding to 'went.' Causal of 'wind.'

373. **League**—Alliance, *i.e.*, of marriage vows, soon to be fulfilled.

Till death—Perhaps a reminiscence of the phrase in the marriage ceremony, "till death us do part."

374. **Whiles**—While. Originally gen. case of the noun 'while.'

Employ—In second quarto printed 'apply' and in the folio changed to imply. All from Lat. *plicare*

375. **I'll to my queen**—I shall hasten to Titania.

Beg her India boy—Apparently the idea is that Titania will be conscious of her ludicrous position, and that in return for the restoration of true vision she will surrender the page. Or perhaps her love for Bottom will have stopped her love for the changeling, and she will willingly surrender the boy; after which (without her consciousness thereof) Oberon will undo the charm. See IV. i. 56—60 where Titania acknowledges her fault, and II. i. 185 which also favours the former view.

377. **From monster's view**—From delight in the vision of a monster; *i e*, of Bottom with the donkey's head.

Peace—Harmony.

379. **Night's swift dragons**—Night personified sits in a chariot drawn by dragons. Dragons (a sort of winged serpents) were swift and wakeful. This reference is frequent in Elizabethan writers though some say it is not correct according to the ancient mythology. Cf. *Cymbeline*, II. ii. 48; also MILTON, *Il Penseroso*, 59; *Comus*, 131. Drayton, like Milton, assigns dragons to the moon.

Cut the clouds—Plough their way through the cloudy sky. The meaning is that night is nearly over.

380. **Yonder**—Pointing to the East. Night has moved westward.

Aurora's harbinger—The morning star, the planet Venus, whose appearance heralds the dawn. Venus being comparatively near the sun is to be seen either after sunset or before sunrise (never at midnight). Aurora, the dawn, is in mythology of course a goddess, wife of Tithonus. Harbinger is forerunner, formerly specially used of one who went before to arrange lodging for a person of rank. Milton calls the planet 'day's harbinger.'

381. **Ghosts**—Spirits of the dead.

Wandering, *i.e.*, during the night; an expression of restlessness.

382. **Troop home**—By day the spirits were supposed to be fettered; at night they were loose and roamed about; in the morning they had to hasten to their prisons; as in Milton's Nativity poem, "each fettered ghost slips to his several grave." Cf. *Hamlet*, I. i. 150, and seq.

Damned spirits—Suicides, murderers and others who have not been allowed religious burial. 'Damned' is the same as condemned and means 'lost.'

383. **Crossways**—Where roads crossed and there was much traffic. In such places suicides were buried.

Floods—Referring probably to accidental as well as deliberate drowning. Parties whose bodies were not recovered and who did not receive regular burial were fated to wander as ghosts, having the waters as their special abode.

384. **Wormy beds**—A hideous phrase repeated by Milton in his earliest poem and by Lamb in his lines on the Death of an Infant. The grave is often metaphorically described as a 'bed.'

385. **Day**—The light of day; therefore all who see.

Shames, *i.e.*, the shame and wretchedness of condemned spirits.

386. Puck is expressing the popular opinion that these spirits deliberately avoid the day-light.

387. **Consort**—Associate (as with a person).

Black-browed night—Dark night. Night is again personified and represented as black and gloomy. Cf. the epithet 'frowning'; *e.g.*, *R. and J.*, II. iii. 1.

388. **Another sort**—A far higher dignity, and not afraid of the morning light.

389. **Morning's love**—If this is mythological language the reference is either to Tithonus, the husband, or to Cephalus, the lover, of Aurora. The latter was a famous hunter, and

the next line seems to confirm the application to him. Milton expresses the same idea when in *Il Penseroso* he refers to the civil-suited Morn as wont in gay garb to hunt 'with the Attic boy.' Oberon says he has often hunted in the companionship of Cephalus; *i.e.*, he is often abroad in the morning twilight.

390. **Forester**—Foresters go out to hunt or work in the forest in the early morning. Similarly (and perhaps in the same shape and garb, "the Lincoln green" so often referred to by Scott) Oberon has been wont to go abroad.

Groves—The haunts of the Fairies, their forests.

391. **Even till**.....Till sunrise when the twilight has given place to full day-light.

Eastern gate, *i.e.*, of the heavens: where the sun issues forth. Cf. Milton's *L'Allegro*: Right against the eastern gate Where the great sun begins his state.

All fiery red—The Eastern sky, and not merely the sun's orb, often appears bright red at sunrise. So also at sunset. When the rays are horizontal the red elements penetrate through the air more powerfully than the other colours do. Thus instead of white light we see, in brilliant diversity, really parts thereof.

392. **Neptune**—The ocean. See above, II. i. 126.

With . **beams**—The epithet 'blessed' is connected with the driving away of the lost spirits, and implies Oberon's familiarity with day.

Some editors remove the comma at the end of this line in order to connect the phrase directly with the following line; wrongly.

393. **Yellow gold**—The description of the sea under the bright line of the morning sky. Cf. Scott's description of Loch Katrine as "one burnished sheet of living gold." (*Lady of the Lake*, I). Metaphor.

The tautological epithet 'yellow' is added to enhance the contrast with the ordinary green. Perhaps also a particular shade of colour is indicated, as 'red' also was an epithet of 'gold.'

394. **Streams**—The plural probably refers to the various movement of the waves. Milton, perhaps remembering this passage, included the mouths of rivers. See *Comus*, 18-19. "Neptune, besides the sway of every salt flood and each ebbing stream."

395. **But** ..Although we do not fear the day still it is well to finish this business while it is still dark.

396—9. Collier suggested that these lines are from an old

ballad; and that this explains Puck's calling himself Goblin, and using the imperative mood. But there is no difficulty in Puck's thus addressing himself.

401. We may suppose that Puck has already by some sound drawn Lysander towards the stage.

402. **Drawn**—With sword drawn. So elsewhere in Shakespeare.

403. **Straight**—Immediately.

404. **Plainer**—More level and unentangled; more suitable for a combat.

405-6. Demetrius speaks thus because he cannot see Lysander. By referring to bush (the opposite of 'plainer ground') he charges his rival with unveracity. In the early editions there is a colon after bush and no point after speak.

407—11. Puck still speaks in Lysander's voice. He accuses Demetrius of boasting to the stars and bushes but not advancing. Demetrius cannot see any one to advance towards.

409. **Recreant**—Coward. So in the *Lady of the Lake*, V, 'let recreant yield who fears to die.' O.Fr. *recreant*, faint-hearted, the pres. part. of *recroire*. Low Lat. *re-credere*, to recant, apostatise.

Child—Used in contempt.

410-11. Puck pretends that Demetrius is so contemptibly weak that it would be dishonourable to fight with him. He will punish him as a naughty child is punished

412. **Try no manhood**—We will not make trial of our strength, valour, prowess, in this place.

413—16. This speech of Lysander refers to the voices of Puck heard before the last entering of Demetrius.

413. **Dares**—Boldly challenges.

415. **Lighter-heeled**—Swifter.

417. **That**—With the result that.

Dark uneven way—Rough ground where the path cannot be seen.

418. **Gentle day**—Day = day-light. Gentle is a general epithet of compliment; here used in weariness of the night. Cf. 'blessed beams' above.

419. **Grey**—An epithet of the twilight, or morning. As in Milton frequently. Cf. 'grey-eyed morn,' *R. and J.*, II. iii. 1.

420. **Spite**—Disappointment in not being able to find his foe.

421. Lysander is asleep and Demetrius is again brought in by Puck.

Ho, ho, ho!—These words constitute a characteristic cry of Puck. They are the refrain of an ode of twelve stanzas

(attributed to Ben Jonson) in which the deeds of Puck are boastfully recounted.

422. **Abide**—Wait and receive my encounter.

Darest—Hast courage.

Wot—Know. Present tense of the verb to wit. Plur. pr. *witen*, past *wist*. A.S. pres. *wat*; plur. *witan*.

423. **Shifting every place**—Dodging; suddenly altering one's course, appearing from a different quarter, &c. In connection with this phrase it should be noted that, in the folio at line 416 there is a stage-direction, *Shifting places*, which would seem to be a sort of marginal explanation of the 'fast' and 'faster' which otherwise in the limited space of a stage could not be represented. This folio direction may have been originally a direction to the players intended for some lines farther up (as where Lysander disappears, line 404).

426. **Buy this dear**—Pay a heavy price for this; *i.e.*, suffer severely.

428. **Faintness constraineth**—Demetrius acknowledges exhaustion from fatigue and want of sleep.

429. **To measure** To lie at full length.

Cold bed—The ground.

430. **Look to be visited**—Expect me to arrive ready for an encounter.

431—36. A stanza in the six lines form (as in *Venus and Adonis*).

432 **Abate**—Lessen, shorten.

Shine comforts—May comforts shine; cf. above II. ii. 38. Helena prays for morning.

433. **May back**—May go back. Note that **day-light** has the accent on the second syllable.

434. **These that**—These persons who detest.

435-36. **Sleep**... **steal**—May sleep which steal; *i.e.*, quietly withdraw) me for a time

Mine own company—My own society, *i.e.*, my own thoughts regarding myself.

437. **Yet but three**—As yet there are only three; said (according to the punctuation) in an interrogatory manner.

438. **Two** .. A grotesque statement as if it required two couples to make the number four.

Makes—The verb is necessarily plural, doubly so. Puck follows an inaccuracy frequent in provincial speech, possibly due to the fact that at one time in the North of England the plural often ended in *-es*.

439. **Curst**—Cf. above line 300. Here the idea is, bewitched or maddened.

440. **Cupid**—The god; used here for the feeling of love which is poetically supposed to be produced by the god.

With regard to the rhythm and metre of these five lines, note that in the first and third (lines 437, 439) a middle syllable is wanting, and in all the lines the opening unaccented syllable is wanting. These variations were frequent in the older four-beat measure, according to the original idea of which each line consisted of two balanced halves. The omission of a middle syllable was made on exactly the same principle as the omission of the opening syllable, though it was done less frequently. The loss of a syllable was atoned for by the lengthening of the voice on an emphatic one. See above, beginning of Act II; and for fuller discussion see Skeat's Introduction to his edition of Chaucer.

442—47. Another stanza parallel to Helena's.

442. **Never so**—Extremely.

443. **Bedabbled**—Her clothes wetted.

444-5. I am physically exhausted.

447. **Heavens**—By metonymy for the Powers in Heaven. May God (or angels) defend Lysander if they are to fight a duel.

451. **Your eye**—The preposition 'to' here is inserted almost unanimously, but none the less certainly wrongly, by the editors. It is our duty to accept the metre as Shakespeare deliberately put it. Note that not in this line only, but also in the other alternate lines a syllable is wanting. Sleep sound, thou tak'st—in these cases also each of the two syllables has to receive a lengthened accent. It may appear that 'In the sight' is different; but it is not materially so. 'In the' and 'of the' were expressions recognised in Elizabethan literature and in *Milton* as practically one syllable.

When false theories and emendations are abandoned it is easy to see how Shakespeare meant these two-syllabled lines to be uttered. On 'Sleep,' 'Your' and 'Thou' the voice is lengthened; in a soothing manner in the first instance though gradually the tones become exhilarating.

452. **Remedy**—Used of the juice which is to undo the effects of the first anointing.

453. **Wak'st**—Monosyllable; so written in the early editions.

457. **Former lady's eye**—Eye of thy former lady-love, viz., Hermia. This line rhymes with line 452.

458. **Country proverb known**—Familiar expression of rustics. Puck has a special knowledge of rustics.

460. **In your waking**—When you wake.

461. **Jack Jill**—Male and female names, often coupled together as in the nursery rhyme 'Jack and Jill went up the hill.' Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, V. ii. 805.

463. Another proverbial saying.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

The first scene of this new Act marks a change in time and characters rather than in scene or place. The first part of it completes the story of Bottom and Titania; and it suits the poet's convenience that it should be enacted near the spot where the young lovers have all fallen asleep. The successive parts of the scene are supposed to take place after considerable intervals of time. At the end the fairies disappear and all the real characters of the play are found together. Everything is finished except the final festivities. It is noticeable that in the attendance on Bottom Fairy Moth (or Mote) is not now heard of. Whether this is due to its smallness, or to any reason connected with the composition of the play can only be matter of conjecture.

1. **Sit thee down**—Sit. An old reflexive use of the verb still. Common provincially.

Flowery bed—See above II. i. 249—254.

2. **Amiable**—Lovely, worthy to be loved. This meaning was due to the supposition that the word was derived from *amabilis* from *amare*, to love. It is really derived from *amicabilis*, from *amicus*, a friend (the *c* being regularly lost).

Coy—Caress, stroke. The verb is formed from the adj. coy. Etymologically a doublet of 'quiet' and originally meaning 'reserved.'

3. **Musk-roses**—Cf. II. i. 282.

Sleek smooth head—Soft shining hair. Sleek (which is from the Scandinavian) has the idea of oily: it is used of the smooth skin of well-fed cattle. Here the reference is to the ass's head.

4. **Large ears**—The ass's ears which Titania in her infatuation deems beautiful.

Gentle joy—Joy is used by metonymy for the object of delight or the person who causes the joy (as 'love' is frequently in this play). Still so used in Yorkshire. Gentle is an epithet of compliment combining the ideas of meekness and superiority.

7. **Scratch**—Bottom feels the new head not quite com-

fortable. Something is tickling him, and he is himself unable to do all the scratching required.

Mounsieur—This spelling which was once an alternative spelling is doubtless meant to indicate Bottom's pronunciation. The use of a French form is in accordance with Bottom's pretentious conceit. There may, however, be an appropriateness in the implication that these strange diminutive people were French or Italian seeing that they are as it were foreigners. Monsieur (the French equivalent of English Mr.) is etymologically My Sir.

10. **Red-hipped humble-bee**—Some bees have the hinder part of a red or bright colour. Bottom seems to recognise these as carrying a large amount of honey.

11. **Thistle**—Some thistles, notably the thistle which is the Scottish emblem, have flowery tops which can yield honey to the bees.

12. **Honey-bag**—Part of the bee. Cf. III. i. 162.

Fret—The slender cobweb might be damaged if it exerted itself violently in killing the bee.

13. **Action**—Act.

15. **Loth**—Unwilling. The first quarto has the alternative spelling loath.

Overflown—The shape and size of Cobweb must be remembered. The fairy is liable to inundation from the honey of one bee.

16. **Signior**—A variation in the style of address. This term is used in Italy both as the equivalent of Mr. and as a higher term of respect. The Old Fr. *seigneur* (whence the English form) and the Italian *signor* represent the Latin *senior*; whence also 'sir.'

19. **Neif**—Hand. The word is equivalent to fist. It is still used provincially, the *f* being voiced as *v*. The folio spelling is *neafe*.

20. **Leave your courtesy**—Bottom is satisfied with the ceremonious politeness already shown, and requires no more. One application refers to the putting on of the hat which has been kept off in token of respect. See *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. ii. 147; V. i. 103.

21. **What's your will?**—What do you desire me to do? For what purpose have you called me?

Cavalery Peaseblossom—The original text contains the name Cobweb which is blunderingly used for Peaseblossom to whom the scratching has been assigned. Bottom has not yet learned to distinguish his attendants, or he forgets his own orders. 'Cavalery' is his pronunciation of some form of

the word cavalier which though literally meaning horseman is a title of respect. The later folios have *cavalero* which suggests the Spanish 'caballero,' and a similar form occurs elsewhere in *Shakespeare*. Or, the Italian *cavaliere* may be imitated. French has the two forms *cavalier* and *chevalier*.

23. **Must to**—Must (go) to. A familiar kind of ellipsis.

24. **Marvellous hairy**—The adjective for the adverb seems to have been regarded as a natural form of uneducated speech. Bottom in his instinctive scratching has discovered that there is something unusual in his face.

25. **Tender ass**—Bottom uses 'ass' in the ordinary figurative sense without any consciousness of the ass's head. His language by its double appropriateness affords amusement to the listeners. His object is to apologise for his ceaseless and ludicrous scratching.

27. **What**—In Old and Middle English the use of 'what' as an extra-grammatical exclamation was frequent.

What wilt.....The queen wishes to divert him from scratching and offers to entertain him.

28. **Reasonable**—Fairly, moderately. Again the adjective for the adverb. Bottom is of course complimenting himself.

29. **The tongs and the bones**—Two old kinds of rustic music. The first was usually called 'tongs and key'; the key being used to strike the tongs and make the rude music. A tong is a two-armed instrument used for handling burning coals or hot iron, necessary in every household. Bones (thin flat pieces of bones) were held in the hand between alternate fingers and struck against each other. They were called 'knackers.' In the eighteenth century they gave place to what were called marrow-bones and cleavers. Something similar is used at the present day by the Christy Minstrels.

After this line the folios (but not the quartos) have a stage-direction, *Music, Tongs, Rural Music* which was probably inserted on behalf of the players. Collier suggested that the music was played outside, in which case it would not be indicated in the text.

31. **Peck of provender**—A 'peck' is a familiar measure of dry food, equal to two gallons. Four pecks make one bushel. Cf. Burns' song 'Willie brewed a peck of maut' (malt). Provender is specially applied to corn or hay or other animal provision. Provender is etymologically the same word as prebend—the final *r* being excrescent. In late Latin *præbenda* meant an allowance of provisions. This request sug-

gests that Bottom has the appetite as well as the hairy face of a donkey.

Munch—This term refers to the process of breaking with the teeth and chewing something hard, such as corn or very dry bread.

Your—Referring to something familiar or well-known.

32. **Dry oats**—A kind of corn on which in its dry form horses are fed. Made into meal, it furnishes the staple food of the peasantry of Scotland.

Desire to—Longing for or towards.

33. **Bottle of hay**—'Bottle' in this phrase denoted a certain well-known measure, amounting according to a document of A.D. 1551 to five pounds. Probably it denoted the quantity ordinarily consumed at one time, the name having reference to the shape in which the bundle was usually tied up. Bottle in this phrase is supposed to be quite distinct from the ordinary word 'bottle' and to be akin to 'beat.' Both are spelt in Middle English *botel*, the one from the Old Fr. *botel*, the other from *bouteille* (Gr. *butis*, a flask). A proverbial expression regarding the seeking of a needle in a bottle of hay is found as late as the seventeenth century.

No fellow—No match; nothing else so good. Cf. the historic expression used by Essex regarding the death of Stratford: "Stone dead hath no fellow."

35. **Squirrel's hoard**—Titania suggests something better than the food of horses or donkeys. The nuts which the squirrel has hoarded for its winter provision seem to Titania finer food.

Thence—Conjecturally inserted to complete the line

36. **Had rather have**—Should rather have. Rather is a comparative, equivalent to sooner; liefer.

Dried peas—Again food for an animal; resembling the gram given to horses in India. Peas are largely used in food, but only as boiled or otherwise cooked. Bottom desires uncooked peas.

38. **Exposition of**—Again the wrong word. Perhaps for disposition to.

39. **Wind**—Fold.

40. **Fairies be gone**.....This line is a sort of parenthesis. Titania checks herself in her caressing until she orders off the attendants. These are no longer needed as Bottom is falling asleep: but the words indicate an impatience due to a partial consciousness of the grotesqueness of the situation. 'Be gone' = be off, *i.e.*, go away.

All ways—Theobald's emendation 'all ways' (*i.e.*, in all

directions) has been accepted, instead of 'always' of the early editions, but seems questionable. It requires that two successive beats should fall on the same syllable (way), which is not desirable. On the other hand it may be held to accord with II. ii. 2—6. But it is possible that Titania in her excitement means to say simply "never come near us."

41. **So**—In this manner. As I wind thee in my arms so the woodbine enfolds the honeysuckle. A literal comparison.

Woodbine—The convolvulus, a winding creeper. See II. i. 251. Titania compares her lover to the honeysuckle and herself to the woodbine. As the woodbine and honeysuckle were names often identified or confused, many editors have found difficulty in this passage. Gifford discussing the following passage in Ben Jonson's *Vision of Delight*—

> Behold
> How the blue bindweed doth itself enfold
> With honeysuckle

remarked that it settled the meaning of Titania's speech. The blue bindweed (which is Shakespeare's woodbine) is the blue convolvulus. Gifford added that (in his day) in many of the counties of England the woodbine was still the name for the great convolvulus.

42. **Gently entwist**—Softly twine round.

Female ivy—The ivy is a creeper which grows round the elm or on walls or other support. Similarly the vine. This connection is in the poets often likened to marriage; that which requires support being represented as the female. Thus Milton, *P.L.*, V. 215—7. 'They led the vine to wed her elm; she spoused about him twines her marriageable arms;' cf. IV. 307. So Shakespeare, *Comedy of Errors*, II. ii. 176.

43. **Enrings**—Forms itself into rings round.

Fingers—Thin branches. While the circles of ivy round the branches or shoots of the elm tree are compared to rings on fingers, there is no reference to the part played by the ring in the marriage ceremony. The fingers are 'barky.' Metaphor.

45. **Sweet sight**—Irony.

46. **Dotage**—Silliness in love. The term is usually applied to the childishness of old age, but here it is used in its natural meaning as the subst. corresponding to the verb 'dote.'

47. **Of late**—This must refer to a period subsequent to Act III, Sc. ii, 400. In that scene Oberon had not seen Titania subsequent to the charming of her vision. At line 395 he goes out and some time thereafter may be supposed to

have met her. In the Introduction it is shown that Act IV is probably the next night after Act III.

48. **Favours**—Referring to flowers which when received and worn as gifts from ladies may be so characterised. Such is the reading of the first quarto and fourth folio. The second quarto and the first three folios have 'savours,' which might refer either to the fragrance of flowers or the sweetness of fruits. The latter meaning would accord with Bottom's desire of honey-bags and Titania's offer of nuts.

49. **Fall out**—Quarrel. So to 'fall in with' is to agree with or to follow.

50. **Temples**—The part of the head or face above the cheek-bone; plural because the two sides are intended. O.F. *temples*; Lat. *tempora*.

Rounded—Encircled. Necessarily the whole (ass's) head is encircled.

51. **Coronet**—Wreath, garland; a diminutive of O.F. *corone*, whence crown.

53. **Swell**—Referring to the largeness of the drops.

Orient—The ordinary epithet of 'pearls' in our older poetry. The meaning is bright, and is supposed to refer primarily to the brightness of gems brought from the East, though we think it more probable that it refers to the colours of sunrise in any land. We know no case of its application to red or green or blue colours. The literal meaning is 'rising,' and the poetic meaning seems to us to be that indicated in Milton's *Nativity Hymn* where the rising sun pillows its chin upon an 'orient wave,' *i.e.*, on a wave bright with the lustre of sunrise. So it is used of the morning beams. 'Orient pearl' is used of morning dew in *Paradise Lost*, V. 2.

Within .. eyes—In the centre of the flowers. Floweret (the diminutive) is written *flouriet* in the early editions.

55. **Like tears**—This double comparison of dewdrops to pearls and tears is repeated by Coleridge: "Dewdrops are the gems of morning, but the tears of mournful eve." The conception in either case is due to the feelings of the speaker, the joy or the sadness in which he beholds the object.

56. **At my pleasure**—As much as I wished, to my full satisfaction.

57. **My patience**—That I should be patient or tolerant towards her, not too severe on her folly. Titania is conscious or ashamed of her mistake. Patience is a trisyllable.

58. **Changeling child**—See II. i. 20, 120.

Which—Whom, according to Modern English.

59. **Straight**—Or, straightway, *i.e.*, immediately, at once.

And her fairy sent—The syntactical form of this clause would not be satisfactory in prose. If it is to be regarded as the second part of a compound sentence, the subject should be repeated—her fairy *she* sent—; if it is subordinate, either the participial form (sending her fairy) or an adverbial conjunction should be introduced. Her fairy is her chief attendant, perhaps the same as in II i. 1—61.

60. **Bower**—Oberon's imaginary palace in his imaginary kingdom. The homes and haunts of fairies are in forests and flowery regions. The bower is an arbour. This **fairy land** is somewhere in the distant East. Thither the fairy may have gone in the interval between Acts III and IV.

61. **Now**—Now that.

Undo—Remove. The prefix is reversive, and not merely negative. Cf. *Comus*, 904.

62. **This** . This defect (or disease) of vision which is so hateful in its effects.

63. **Transformed scalp**—Unshapely crown. Both words are used vaguely. The epithet means changed from human form. 'Scalp' is properly the top of the head, whereon hair grows; here used simply of the disguise put on Bottom's head.

64. **Swain**—Originally a servant; in poetry generally a rustic; here used of an ordinary tradesman.

65. **He**—Absolute case.

Other—Plural. So frequently in old writers, as in *Mat.*, XIII. 8.

66. **May all**—All may. Abbott prefers to think that the pronoun (they) is omitted.

Repair—Betake themselves. Distinct from repair = restore. O.F. *repairier*, Lat. *re, patria*.

67. **Accidents**—Unpleasant incidents. Accident was what was not essential or necessary; literally what befalls. The modern meaning, casualty, is not intended. Compare with this expression the alternative title of *She stoops to conquer*, viz., "the mistakes of a night."

68. **But as**—(In any way) except as. But is *not* dependent on 'more.' 'No more' would properly be followed by 'than of,' but the meaning thereof would be slightly different. 'Than as' would be grammatically wrong.

Dream—Here referring to night-mare, but with a reference to the title of the play.

69. **Release**—*I.e.*, from the power of the charm; akin to relax.

72. **Dian's bud**—The flower or bud of Diana which can thus prevail over Cupid's flower is recognised as that of the

Agnus castus or *chaste tree.* In *The Flower and the Leaf* Diana is said to bear in her hand a branch thereof. It befitted her as the goddess of chastity. Shakespeare is allegorically representing the power of virtue or chastity. See Milton's *Comus*, 415—475, 1019—1023.

O'er—Probably following 'power' in next line, though the meaning above or upon would give good enough sense.

73. **Blessed**—Includes the ideas of benignant and magical. So Milton has 'blest song,' *Comus* 268, while the sorcerer is 'unblest,' 907. 'Bless' is a derivative of 'blood' and originally meant, consecrate by blood. Here the reference is primarily to the properties of the *agnus castus*, but partly also to the verses uttered in the act of anointing. Cf. V. i. 389, 402.

75. **My Oberon**—My lord, or my dear Oberon. Titania has returned to her allegiance.

Visions—Sights seen in sleep. Something abnormal is suggested.

76. **Methought** .. During the short interval between the application of Diana's bud and the waking Titania in her dreaming saw Bottom as he really was and became half conscious of the situation. Now she is fully alive to the facts.

Enamoured of—In love with. Through Old Fr. from Lat. *amor*.

77. **Do loathe his**—The second quarto and the first folio have *doth*—an older form of the plural. Cf. *Mat.* VI. 19. The same authorities have *this* instead of 'his.' The text is the reading of the first quarto. 'His' and 'this' were often confused. In line 72 both quartos have 'or' for 'o'er.'

Visage—Face. Countenance.

79. **Silence awhile**—Let there be silence for a time. Silence and soft music were favourable to spells. See *Tempest*, V. i. 127.

Head—The 'transformed scalp.' Puck seems slow in obeying.

80. **Music call**—*I.e.*, fairy music. The phrase is an abbreviation of, Summon Musicians to play and sing.

More dead—Deeper; farther removed from consciousness.

81. **Five**—Viz., Demetrius, Lysander, Hermia, Helena, Bottom. The early editions have 'fine' and a semi-colon after sleep. This makes difficult sense and grammar. The emendation, which is generally accepted, is due to Thirlby and Theobald.

Sense—Consciousness, power of perception.

82. **Music ho!**—Titania is calling to her fairies who are doubtless out of sight.

Charmeth—Induceth by some magic spell.

Music still—This is a stage-direction of the folios (wanting in the quartos). The meaning seems to be—music soft or faint, or inaudible—the gentle music of Titania's attendants. Cf. 'Still music' in *A. Y. L. I.* and *Tempest*.

83. **Now**—In the second quarto and first folio this 'Now' is wanting. The later folios supply the missing syllable by printing 'awak'st.' It is possible that the ordinary rhythm is deliberately departed from, the omission at the beginning being made up for by the slowness towards the end. The line expresses Puck's belief and wish that Bottom will continue to be, if not an ass at least a fool. During the 'still music,' and while he is removing the scalp, his voice is heard uttering this roguish sentiment.

84. **Sound Music**—Oberon seems to call for louder music, so that he and his queen may have a dance of reconciliation. If the dance is to take place on the stage, it is necessary that the music be heard by the spectators.

Take hands—Join hands (for dancing). Cf. *Temp.* I. ii. 377—

> Come unto these yellow sands,
> And then take hands.

85. **Rock the ground**—To 'rock' is to produce a swaying motion to and fro, used familiarly of rocking a cradle. In this case the 'rocking' will intensify the sleep of the sleepers. The power claimed seems the same as that implied in the stamp (III. ii. 25). The effect is produced by the feet of the fairies as they dance. Dryden uses the phrase 'rock the ground' of an earthquake.

Be—Are, in the sense of 'lie.'

86. **New in amity**—Our quarrels are ended, our love is renewed. 'New' may be either the adjective or the adverb. The latter gives the better sense, the objection to it being that the line already contains the kindred adverb 'now.'

87. **To-morrow midnight**—A note of time. It is now the night of the 30th April though nearly morning.

Solemnly—With such pomp and dignity as becomes a great occasion in a king's palace.

88. **Triumphantly**—As at a triumph or grand festivity; but, perhaps, also in recognition of Titania's recovery. Cf. in *Comus*, 974, To triumph in victorious dance O'er sensual folly and intemperance.

89. **Bless it**—Cf. Oberon's speech at the end.

To all fair prosperity—The first quarto reads prosperity (cf. II. i. 73), but the second quarto has 'posterity' and the

reference seems to be mainly to children. See Oberon's final speech where in addition to children the blessings of peace and safety are specified: 'To' seems to express the end or object of the blessing. With 'fair' as applied to 'posterity,' cf. V. i. 394—9. The meanings of 'posterity' and 'prosperity' are combined in V. i. 391-2; the readings of II. i. 73, V. i. 403—5 and the possibly higher authority of the first quarto seem to turn the scale in favour of the wider word.

90. **Faithful**—Used in anticipation; Lysander has to be cured of the effect of the love-juice.

With Theseus—Along with. At the same time as.

91. **In jollity**—With festivity and rejoicing. 'Jolly' is a word whose meaning has deteriorated. In the opening of the *Fairy Queen* the Red Cross Knight is described as 'full jolly,' *i.e.*, very handsome. The usual meaning was gay, festive. Milton applies it to the Hours leading on the summer (*Sonnet* I). In Shirley's *Triumph of Peace*, a masque, Jollity is pictured as dressed in a "flame-coloured suit, but tricked like a morrice-dancer with scarfs and napkins, his hat fashioned like a cone." This was at the close of the Elizabethan epoch. The word was derived through Old Fr. from the Scandinavian, from the name of a feast Jol (English Yule, *i.e.*, Christmas).

93. **Morning lark**—The lark's song is the poetic note of the morning, as the nightingale's of the evening. In *Romeo and Juliet*, III. v. 6, the lark is called the 'herald of the morn.' So in *Cymbeline*, II. iii., the song begins, Hark, hark! the lark at Heaven's gate sings. Cf. *L'Allegro*, 41—

> To hear the lark begin his flight
> And singing startle the dull night.

The song of the lark, like the crowing of the cock, is a warning to the fairies to depart.

94. **Sad**—Staid, sober. So often in the Elizabethans. According to the etymologists the original meaning was 'sated,' but the sense of 'sober' is in Chaucer, and his contemporary Wyclif applies it to a stone or rock as 'fixed.'

95. **Trip we**—Poetic inversion. With something of the suggestion of 'we have to trip.' 'Trip' may be called the technical name of fairy movement.

Night's shade—The darkness. 'The' which is in the second quarto and the folios is wanting in the first quarto. If it is omitted then 'night's shade' is to be regarded as metrically parallel to 'moon's sphere,' II. i. 7. But as this passage is less lyrical, there is less reason to expect unusual metres. In

'the night's' there is, however, a transposition of stress (the accent falling on the last two syllables successively) which may be justified by the sense, but otherwise is not desirable. The omission of the article favours the personification of 'night' and is thus more poetic.

96. **The Globe** ....The earth. If the fairies were to go to the Indian steep they would find it midday. To remain in the darkness they must move westward, but Shakespeare may not have cared to consider where they went. It is enough that they evade the light of day. This they do not by hiding in a cave, but by travelling in the train or rear of night.

Compass—Go round. The meaning seems to be that moving westward, they circumnavigate the earth and will be back at Athens in the evening. The moon takes over 24 hours to complete its sphere. If the fairies disappear at 4 A.M., and are back at 8 P.M., they will have been only 16 hours on their journey. This, however, is nothing to the speed of Puck (II. i. 175).

97. **Wandering**—The *errans* of the Latin poets, Virgil and Horace. Repeated in *Il Penseroso*, 67. Cf. above II. i. 7.

98. **My lord**—The language of respect.

In our flight—As we journey.

99. **Came**—Came to pass.

101. **Mortals**—Scornful reference to human beings as an inferior order of creation.

At this point some editors begin a new scene. Fleay would begin the Fifth Act. We have now reached the morning of the last day.

102. **Forester**—Man in charge of a forest, therefore of the game and the hunting.

103. **Observation**—Or observance (J. i. 168); the May-morning rite.

104. **Vaward**—Or vanward, the van or first part; here meaning the first hour of the day. 'Ward' is the same as 'guard'; *va* is an abbreviation of *van*. Old French *a vant*, akin to 'advance.'

106. **Uncouple**—Let loose. The hounds are joined together in pairs.

This line is supposed to contain twelve syllables; hence some omit 'let them' or otherwise alter. If, however, the final e of uncouple be elided and 'in the' be read as one syllable (as was frequently done) there is nothing superfluous.

107. **Despatch**—Used intransitively in the sense of 'make haste.'

108. **Will**—Will (ascend). Will, being in the first person more emphatic than shall, may more readily be allowed to serve the purpose of a full verb. But verbs of motion were frequently omitted.

109. **Confusion**—Mingled sound. Explained as not only of many mouths, but of yells and echoes. The delighted listeners would regard the effect as grandly musical. Pronounced in four syllables.

111. **Hercules, Cadmus**—Legendary or mythological heroes, grouped here at random. Cadmus is associated with the founding of Thebes in Boeotia and with the introduction into Greece of the Phenician alphabet and rites of religion.

112. **Bayed**—Pursued with yelling. No reference to the special use of the term in the phrase 'the stag at bay.' Old French *abbaiier*, Latin *ad, baubari*, to yelp.

Bear—Some would read boar. The distinction is immaterial. Neither belonged to Crete. Bear-hunting is frequently referred to by the poets.

113. **Sparta**—Spartan hounds were famous for swiftness and for power of scent.

114. **Gallant chiding**—The reference is to the loud, deep, bold yelling and barking. Chiding has here no reference to anger or reproach; it was used by poets of the sounds of inanimate nature. The chiding in this case was both brave and musical.

Besides the groves—In addition to the woods where the pursuit was going on.

115. **Fountains**—Perhaps specified on account of the noise of streams or waterfalls mingling with the sounds of the chase. In any case 'skies' and 'fountains' are not specified as returning echoes, but as filled with sound. Cf. in *L'Allegro*—

> Oft listening how the hounds and horn
> Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
> From the side of some hoar hill
> Through the high wood echoing shrill.

116. **Seemed**—The first editions have seeme, probably a mistake for seemed.

Mutual cry—All parts of the country seemed to be sending forth sounds and answers at one and the same time. With the cries and yells mingle echoes from every side, and the combined sounds fill earth and air. Every part seems answering every other.

In Scott's description of a Stag hunt (*Lady of the Lake*, I, stanzas 3—10) as here the echoes are emphasised: *e.g.*—

> Rock, glen and cavern paid them back.
> To many a mingled sound at once
> The awakened mountain gave response.

117. **So musical** . . This line consists of two oxymorons. **Discord** is the opposite of 'concord,' it is 'an inharmonious combination, *as* a putting together of sounds that disagree, or in Bacon's words "a harshness of divers sounds meeting."

Sweet thunder—Metaphorical description of a loud (and pleasant) noise breaking through the air.

118. **My hounds**—This description is partially based on what Shakespeare read in Golding's *Ovid* of the hounds of Sparta and Crete, but mainly on the characteristics of some leading type of English hound.

119. **Flewed**—Formed from the subst. 'flews' which denotes the overhanging sides of the upper lips of the blood-hound, the chaps.

Sanded—An epithet of colour, from sand; denoting either **a sandy** (*i.e.*, yellowish) colour generally, or (more probably) variegated with small yellow spots.

120. **Ears that** . . The ordinary blood-hound has long smooth pendulous ears, reaching to the ground as the dog moves with head downwards 'endeavouring' to scent the game.

121. **Crook-kneed and dewlapped**—The hounds intended have short thick smooth legs with a peculiar formation of the knee. Between the fore-legs folds of skin hang loose. See on II. i. 50.

Like Thessalian bulls—Thessaly was noted for its bulls and horses. In the *Tempest*, III. iii. 47, it is said that there are mountaineers "Dewlapped like bulls whose throats had hanging at them wallets of flesh."

122. **Slow** . . In the *Noble Art of Venerie* (1611), the hounds known as St. Hubert's are described as "mighty of body, nevertheless their legs are low and short, likewise they are not swift although they be very good of scent."

Matched in mouth—A pack of hounds was supposed to form a choir producing a sort of unison of notes; to this end they were mixed, some being deep-mouthed, others loud-ringing, others intermediate, like the bass, tenor and alto in recognised music. Such combination produced what was deemed 'sweetness of cry.' 'Matched' means fittingly combined, musically adapted and harmonised.

Like bells—The choir of hounds is likened to a peal of bells where different kinds are combined so as to produce from various notes and sounds a rich harmony. 'Each under each' refers to the arrangement of the bells.

123. **More tuneable**—In finer tune, more perfectly harmonious. The use of suffixes was in Shakespeare's time more indefinite than now.

124. **Halloo'd**—Verb from holla, or hollo, or hallo, or most frequently halloo, which is the term specially denoting the cry of the huntsman.

Cheered with horn—The dogs are encouraged by the sound of the hunter's horn as soldiers by music.

126. **Soft!**—An interjection, equivalent to hush! or stop! Theseus has just noticed the sleeping ladies.

Nymphs—A playful suggestion that ladies found in the woods at night must be wood-nymphs. Also a compliment to their beauty.

129. **Old Nedar's**—Cf. I. i. 107. The name Nedar is unknown.

130. **Of**—At. See I. i. 231.

Their—The folios following the second quarto have 'this' which may have been a misprint.

132. **The rite of May**—This is the passage which seems to fix May-day as the date of the play, or at least of Theseus' marriage which is the occasion of the Fifth Act. It was customary to rise early on May-morning and to go out to the fields or woods and to bathe the face in May dew. See Milton's song:—

> Hail bounteous May that dost inspire
> Mirth and youth and warm desire.
> Woods and groves are of thy dressing,
> Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing,
> Thus we salute thee with our early song,
> And welcome thee and wish thee long.

Hearing our intent—Hearing what was our intention (*i.e.*, with regard to the May-morning observance and sport).

133. **Grace**—Honour.

Our solemnity—Probably referring to the coming marriage. The movements of Theseus and Hippolyta on the morning of their marriage day would be matter of public interest, and would afford an opportunity to others of doing them honour.

138. **Morrow**—Morning, as we say. Morn and morrow

(formerly *morwe*) are both abbreviations or contractions of the Mid. Eng. *morwen*.

Saint Valentine—Used by metonymy for St. Valentine's day, the 14th February; on which day birds were supposed to pair.

139. **Begin**..... Theseus finds two couples sleeping in the wood. Bottom is a little way off and not observed. So he compares them to birds newly paired.

Wood-birds—Metaphor, used because they are in a wood. In l. 12, he had described the ladies as nymphs.

But to couple now—Only now to pair.

140. **Pardon**—(I beg your) pardon. The stage-direction indicating that they kneel is due to Capell, as are most of the directions printed in this scene.

141. **You two**—The men.

Rival enemies—They are rivals in love; that is to say (as he supposes), they both desire Hermia. Rivals are not necessarily enemies, but in this case the enmity was strong. See the opening scene. 'Rival' is here an adj. The Latin *rivalis* was originally applied to neighbours who used the same stream (*rivus*).

142. **Gentle concord**—As witnessed by their sleeping quietly on the same spot.

In the world—In this world of strife of enmity. The phrase expresses surprise.

143. **That hatred** . . The gentle concord consists in the fact that two persons hating one another sleep side by side without fear. Hatred and hate are both used for the concrete; *i.e.*, for persons hating. This confidence felt by 'hatred' is described as remoteness from jealousy. The three lines may be paraphrased: How on this wicked earth has a concord been produced of such a kind that a man full of hatred is so free of jealousy as to sleep by the side of the man who hates him in turn, without fearing any act of hostility?

145. **Amazedly**—In a state of mental perplexity.

146. **Half sleep, half waking**—Half-asleep and half-awake. But although the meaning is plain the grammatical intention is not obvious. Sleep may be an adj. (for asleep or a verb (for sleeping), or a substantive after reply indicating the character of the answer.

In these three lines Lysander is gradually recollecting the circumstances under which they left Athens. It is to be remembered that Puck undid the charm on Lysander's eyes, but a certain mental bewilderment continues for a little.

149. **Bethink me**—A reflexive verb meaning to recall, or reflect.

151. **Where we might**—The text is the reading of the first quarto which supposes that Lysander is interrupted in the middle of a sentence by Egeus. The second quarto and folios end line 151 with 'be' (an eleventh syllable) and have a full stop after law. The metrical objection to this is serious as an extra syllable should not be accented. The abrupt ending of the first quarto (with comma after 'law') would not have been invented, nor is it likely that it is accidental. The Cambridge reading puts a full stop after 'law' as if there were no interruption.

152. **Without**—Beyond, outside.

153. **Enough**. He has confessed sufficiently 'My lord' is Theseus.

154. **The law**—The sentence or punishment according to law. In I. i. it was Hermia that was threatened with death.

155. **Stolen**—Crept secretly.

They would—These words are repeated in the same sense; just as words are repeated in the two preceding lines. It is Egeus' manner.

156. **Thereby to have**—With the intention thereby of defeating. Defeat combines the ideas of baffle and deprive. Etymologically defeat is the same as defect (Lat. *facere*) and meant originally, undo.

157. **Your wife**—Your intended wife.

160. **Purpose hither**—Purpose (viz., to come) hither.

161. **In fury**—In passionate anger.

162. **In fancy**—In love, or love-sick; not merely in imagination but really enough.

163. **Wot**—Know. Present tense, the correct past being *wist*.

164. **Melted as**...A fine simile; Demetrius' love for Helena vanished from his heart as snow silently disappears when it is dissolved in the warm air. There is, however, considerable difficulty as to the exact text. The early editions print the lines wrongly thus—

> But by some power it is my love
> To Hermia melted as the snow
> Seems to me now as the remembrance of an idle gawd.

Numerous attempts have been made to make of this three regular lines. All follow Pope in placing 'to Hermia' in the

same line with 'my love'; thus making a line with two extra unaccented syllables, which would have been read by Shakespeare as an Alexandrine (cf. l. 171). Secondly (and consequently), the editors have to supply a syllable in the next line; either after 'as' doth, or melts, or thaws; or before 'melted' all, or so, or being; or something else. We have ventured to arrange the text anew, not altering a single word, but simply transposing one phrase. The metrical conditions are thus satisfied, and we think the sense is improved: for there is a decided stiffness in making 'melted' a past participle, and love the immediate subject to 'seems.' On this view the first half of line 165 is to be read as parenthetical.

166. **Idle gawd**—Useless toy.

168—170. Heart and eye are fixed only on Helena.

168. **The faith, the virtue**—She is the object of my allegiance and the strength of my soul. Faith and virtue are naturally combined as general terms expressive of religion and morality; but they are used here in some narrow specific sense.

169. **Object pleasure**—Object is parallel to faith, and means that to which my gaze is directed. Pleasure is parallel to virtue and expresses what is desirable to the sight, as virtue expresses what is desirable in the soul.

170 **Is**—Singular, agreeing with Helena.

171 **Betrothed**—Formed from 'troth' (= truth).

Saw—The early editions have *see*; which was either a misprint or a provincial form of the past.

172. **Like a sickness**—The emendation 'like in sickness' is unauthorised and gives an inelegant sense or usage to 'like.' The meaning, however, seems to be 'like one in sickness,' or, as in the case of sickness. If sickness can be used for a sick person, the abstract for the concrete (Capell), the difficulty would disappear, but this requires to be proved. It may be regarded as certain (Mr. Furness notwithstanding) that sickness is not the accusative after loathe. The general opinion is that the text is corrupt. It is possible that the 'But' came in from the next line and displaced something. If we could read 'Like as in sickness,' the full meaning would be expressed. At this part the text seems less accurate than usual.

Food—Helena is thus metaphorically described. Cf. above the relation to his heart and eye.

173. **Come to**.. .. Restored to the natural use of my faculties. 'Taste' is in keeping with the metaphor of food. Cf. above III. ii. 172.

176. **Fortunately met**—A sort of salutation; an assurance that there is nothing to fear. Cf. 'Well met.'

177. **Discourse**—Story, narrative, subject. Shakespeare uses the word of the subject or the faculty of conversation, and not in any technical sense.

178. **Overbear**—Overrule. Theseus speaks as sovereign.

179. **Temple**—As Christian marriages are solemnised in churches, so Shakespeare assumes that in ancient Greece the temples were similarly used.

By and by—Soon, immediately. In this phrase 'by' is supposed to express *nearness*. It was used primarily of place, but mainly (and now exclusively) of time. The repetition of 'by' is supposed to be simply for emphasis.

180. **Eternally**—Cf. I. i. 85.

181. **For**—Inasmuch as, since.

182. **Something worn**—Somewhat spent.

Our purposed hunting—The hunt which we purposed. Probably we are to suppose that Theseus is affected by the case of Hermia, and the story of Demetrius.

Shall—Indicating an authoritative resolution.

183. **Away**—Come away; addressed not only to Egeus, but to the whole party. See below, line 195.

Three and three—Three bridegrooms and three brides.

186. **Undistinguishable**—Perhaps indistinct. The reference is to the events and experiences of the night. The meaning may be that the events are blended and confused in memory, or simply that each is dimly remembered. In any case they are discerned as objects far distant which have lost their size and distinctness. Demetrius is as a man recovered from sickness; he is now happy and would fain forget the past. It is, however, possible, as Capell suggested, that this speech should be given to Lysander.

187. **Like far-off** .. Distant mountains appear like clouds and in a hazy atmosphere it is often difficult to determine whether a dimly-seen object is a hill or cloud. Snow-clad mountains especially resemble white clouds, but ordinary mountains may be mistaken for dark or purple clouds. This simile is applicable to either of the meanings suggested for undistinguishable. The mountains may be dimly seen; or they may be seen in the midst of clouds from which they cannot be certainly distinguished.

188. **Methinks**—The emphasis is on the first syllable as Hermia is describing a personal experience quite different.

With parted eye—From two centres of vision; either each eye being conceived as divided so as to see the object double;

or the one eye being separated from and out of focus with the other. Hermia's eyes were of course not anointed or bewitched, but she had the mortification of seeing her associates in two characters—Lysander loving and rejecting her, Helena friendly and estranged; Demetrius loving first herself, and then Helena.

This passage recalls the House of Commons legend regarding Pitt and Dundas, one of whom could not see the Speaker in the chair, while the other saw two!

189. **So methinks**—Helena also has found her associates in two characters.

190. **Like a jewel**—Like a once lost jewel which has belonged to some one else, and on which some one else may still have a claim. Helena having heard the speech of Demetrius (lines 163—175) now realises that he has truly returned to her love, but she cannot be quite sure yet that he may not have to marry Hermia.

For 'jewel' Warburton suggested 'gemell,' *i.e.*, twin, a truly grotesque emendation which several learned editors adopted.

191. According to the quartos Demetrius' speech begins "Are you sure that we are awake"? This sentence is omitted in the folios. It is weak in meaning and gives an incomplete line. It seems to us that the text is better without it.

192. **We sleep**—If the Duke bade us follow him and we are not doing it then we are like sleepers. Demetrius is not quite sure if he is awake, as his faculties have undergone a change; but if he is once convinced that things are real then he is eager to follow.

195. **To the temple**—Lysander also noted the instruction and especially the reference to the temple where the marriage ceremonies are to be performed.

196. **Why then** Such concurrence of testimony is proof that they are awake and not dreaming.

197. **And** .... Demetrius feels happy and is therefore ready to talk of the troubles they have got over.

Dreams—Cf. above line 68. Demetrius is now fully awake, and regards (or wishes to regard) the past as altogether unreal.

198. **When my cue** ....Bottom has in his dreaming been going over the part which he is to act at Theseus' marriage festivity. In the midst thereof he suddenly awakes. For 'cue,' see III. i.

199. **Next**—Next cue.

201. **Stolen**—Secretly departed. 'They have' is understood.

202. **A most rare vision**—He is now fully awake and has lost his ass' head, but not his vanity. 'Rare' is excellent.

203. **Past**—Beyond.

204. **Ass**—A familiar metaphor of Bottom's.

Go about to—Endeavour, attempt.

207. **Patched fool**—Referring to the motley garments of professional fools and jesters. These were covered with patches (or pieces of cloth) of a rough kind and of various colours.

208. **Offer** Come forward, try.

209. **The eye of** . This whole sentence is a blundering appropriation of a passage of scripture, *Isa.*, LXIV. 4; *1st Cor.*, II. 9. The blundering confusion was a familiar device for comic effect. It is ridiculous to suppose that Bottom is deliberately parodying.

212. **Ballad**—This was the prevailing type of popular poetry. A ballad was a short rapid narrative poem usually intended to be sung. It is the type intermediate between epic and lyric poetry, or between a tale and a song. Bottom uses a familiar name, but he simply means a piece of poetry. The Shakespearian spelling is *ballet*.

213. **No bottom**—No foundation or reality. It was simply a vision or a dream. The very existence of Titania is a dream. Nevertheless Bottom is highly delighted with the vision and fairy attentions. Shakespeare in taking us back to realities wishes to leave with us a true impression of Bottom's vanity.

214 **A play**—As the reference seems to be to the theatricals for which Bottom and his friends have been making preparations, editors have suggested for 'a' either 'the' or 'our.' Possibly, however, the wrong word is deliberately given in further illustration of Bottom's blundering. It is not likely that Bottom would be contemplating any other acting "before the Duke."

216. **Gracious**—Gratifying. As 'gracious' is the appropriate epithet of the Duke, and is naturally applied to his action and feelings, it is probably used here as another illustration of Bottom's inaccurate use of language.

Her death—The death of Thisbe, the heroine of the piece. This is of course an absurdity as Pyramus dies before Thisbe, but it is worthy of Bottom. The comic effect is twofold: first in the impossibility, secondly in the high spirits which Pyramus is ready to feel at the instant of his lover's death. Theobald turned 'at her' into 'after,' and Mr. Furness thinks the emendation most certain! Editors seem to think that

Bottom speaks his nonsense consciously and deliberately for their amusement. If it were deliberate on his part, it would be poor comedy.

SCENE II.

A new scene begins here as the action is now transferred from the wood to Athens. Quince's house may be named as in the second scene of Act I, but the location is unauthorised. Pope here begins the fourth scene of his fourth Act; and Fleay the second scene of his fifth Act. The usual heading dates from Capell.

1. **Have you.** The break-up of the party of mechanics took place (III. i. 99,) perhaps forty hours before, and since then the others have heard nothing of Bottom. Now they are met for a final rehearsal and of course require the presence of so important a personage.

3. **Out of doubt** 'Transported' seems to imply not only 'translated' in form but removed from the world of men or at least from Athens. Out of = without.

8. **Discharge** -Act; cf. II. i. 8.

9. **The best wit of any** A combination of comparative and superlative construction; Better wit than any other, the best wit of all the. 'Wit' is intellectual talent.

10. **Handicraft man**—Craftsman, man skilled in some manual work (hand, craft).

11. **Person**—Personal appearance, figure, &c.

13. **Paragon**—Model or example of perfection. Through French from Spanish, ultimately Latin *pro, ad, cum.*

14. **Thing of naught**—An ambiguous expression indicating either nothingness or naughtiness. The ordinary meaning was worthlessness. This sentence seems to show that 'paramour' had begun to be used in its modern (bad) sense, but in the Elizabethan age it was also still used in its older meaning of one supremely loved (French *par, amour*). 'Naught' or 'aught' is *no whit.*

15. **From the temple**—The marriage ceremony is already over. We must suppose a lengthened interval between the two Acts, during which while the audience is diverted with music or other device the hour of marriage is conceived to pass.

16. **There is**—Provincial speech.

Two or three ... The two young couples. To these mechanics Demetrius and Lysander are in the position of lords. The analogy of English peers or aristocrats is in view.

17. **Made men**—Enriched. Our fortunes should have been

made. Theseus would have showered money or honours on those that contributed to his happiness.

19. **Lost sixpence**—Flute conjectures that Theseus, in honour of his marriage, would have assigned to Bottom a pension of sixpence a day for life.

20. **Scaped sixpence**—Sixpence is the minimum less than which could not have been offered, and that sum would doubtless have been pressed on him. 'Scaped' is an alternative form of 'escaped.' (Latin *ex, cappa*). The loss of an initial letter or syllable is known in philology as aphesis or aphæresis.

21. **An the**.....**I'll be.**—A strong way of expressing certainty. An = if.

22. **Sixpence**..... **or nothing**—Less than sixpence would not be accepted. It has been conjectured that Shakespeare is here laughing at some actual case of the pensioning of an 'actor.'

23. **In Pyramus**—For acting in the character of Pyramus.

26. **Hearts**—Brave or hearty fellows. 'Heart' used of persons generally expresses affection as in sweet-heart; or companionship, as in the *Tempest*, I. i. 5.

27. **Courageous**—The wrong word, suggested, perhaps, by Bottom's manner. 'Auspicious' is, perhaps, what is meant, or 'encouraging.'

29. **I am to**—This phrase is elliptical. I am obliged to, about to, ready to, &c. Bottom speaks boastingly as usual; nevertheless he avoids direct reference to what put his associates to flight.

31. **Right as it fell out**—Exactly as it happened.

34. **Hath dined**—Evidently Bottom has just come from the palace where he has learned something of the programme of the evening.

Get your.....Get together your best clothes and dress for the palace. 'Apparel' must include all that is needed for the play.

35. **Strings to your beards**—*i.e.*, your false beards, to be used in the play.

36. **Pumps**—Fine house shoes; low and with thin soles. The word is the same as 'pomp.' The new **ribbons** (or ribbands, as in the older editions) will make them look new and gay.

37. **His part**—To be acted by him.

The short and the long—The whole matter howsoever expressed. The expression is familiar though the 'long' is usually put first.

38. **Preferred**—Submitted for approval (see first scene of next Act); or, possibly, selected in preference to others.

39. **Linen**—Shirt, collar, &c. Here, of woman's dress.

40. **Shall hang out**—Must project. Meant to illustrate not only vulgarity, but the prosaic manner in which the craftsmen endeavour to represent absent objects.

41. **Onions, garlic**—Which cause the breath to smell unpleasantly. Garlic is literally spear-leek; A.S. *gar*, a spear.

Nor—We should say 'or.'

42. **Utter sweet breath**—The verb 'utter' is from the adj. which is another form of 'outer' (from 'out'), and therefore meant to 'give out.' It continued until recently to be used in the sense of circulating money, and in allied meanings. Here the question is whether it is used with reference to speaking only or to both speaking and breathing. Probably the latter.

Doubt but to hear—Doubt (but) that I shall hear. This use of the infin. after 'do not doubt but' is probably ungrammatical (correct grammar is not expected from Bottom). Abbott explains that 'do not doubt but' is equivalent to, I have no doubt or fear to prevent me from believing that; 'but' having a preventive force. He quotes from *Richard II.*: 'I doubt not but to ride as fast as York,' another example which shows that when the meaning was future there was a tendency towards the use of the infinitive.

43. **Sweet comedy**—Sweet as giving pleasure, and comedy as affording an evening's mirth. To Bottom, at all events, the play is a comedy. Cf. I. ii. 12.

44. **Go away**—Some editors put a comma after 'go'; which seems quite uncalled for.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

1. **That**—That that. The second that (i.e., the relative) was very frequently omitted in the Elizabethan age. The reason in such a case as this was perhaps to avoid a repetition of 'that.' The **strange** things are the experiences recounted by Demetrius and Lysander, and the explanations given in connection with Hermia's choice. These give Theseus an opportunity of stating his attitude towards the weird and preternatural. He is sceptical while Hippolyta is credulous.

2. **May**—Can.

3. **Antic**—'Antique' is the spelling of the first quarto; the second quarto and early folios have 'anticke.' Antique and

antic were in Shakespeare's time one and the same word, usually meaning fanciful, of odd character or device. Gradually the form 'antique' was appropriated to the ancient and 'antic' to the odd. Here the meaning is fantastic, grotesque (such as might have been believed long ago). In Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* the term is used as an epithet of sculptured figures such as those of satyrs.

Fables—Stories. Used here simply of what is wonderful and incredible. Cf. the phrase 'old wives' fables.'

Fairy toys—The term 'toy,' though meaning originally (as now) a plaything, was often used in an extended sense, of vain conceits, or (as here) of childish tales. The epithet is used without reference to the fairies of the play.

4. **Seething**—Boiling: the original English word;—'boil being of Latin origin.

5. **Shaping fantasies**—Imaginations that conceive or project unrealities. Fantasy is related to fancy pretty much as antique is to antic. Strictly the term means imagination (Gr. *phantasia*, a making visible), but it was most frequently used of vagaries of the imagination. Cf. Milton's *Comus*, 205. See on I. i. 32.

Apprehend—Apprehend, to seize hold of, or grasp at, is here distinguished from 'comprehend,' to take in fully, to hold and contain. The irregular faculty of fantasy puts forth its efforts in many directions; reason weighs, measures, and assimilates what it sees and understands.

7. **Lunatic, lover, poet**—Theseus' immediate purpose is to associate the lover and the lunatic, so as to account for the story he has just heard; what Shakespeare intends by introducing the poet is not so obvious. The passage that follows is so magnificent as well as playful that it is difficult to say how far Shakespeare is in sport, how far in earnest.

8. **Of.....all compact**--Formed exclusively of. They have no rational element in their minds which are entirely made up of imaginative powers. So in *V. and Ad.*, 'Compact of fire'; *As You Like It*, II. vii. 5., compact of jars. So also in *Par. Lost*, IX. 634, where a wandering fire is said to be 'compact of unctuous vapour.' (Lat. *compactus*, joined together).

10. **All as frantic**—Quite as mad.

11. **Helen's beauty**—Beauty equal to that of Helen of Troy; on account of which the Trojan war took place. In Marlowe's *Faustus*, written a year or two before, Helen's is described as "the face that launched a thousand ships, And burned the topmost towers of Ilium."

Brow of Egypt—Gipsy's brow. The word 'gypsy' is a contraction of 'gyptien. This wandering tribe was formerly

believed to have come from Egypt, but is now known to have come from India. The reference is to the dark complexion. 'Brow' is used by Synecdoche for face.

12. **In a fine frenzy rolling**—Poetic genius is a different kind of madness—a fine kind; not harmful as the lunatics, often beautiful, but always extravagant or absurd. The reference to the poet's eye is mainly metaphorical. The lunatic's eye visibly rolls, but it is the poet's inner eye, his imaginative vision that knows no boundary or control, and is looking sometimes to earth, sometimes to heaven.

14. **Imagination**—Here conceived as the poetic faculty.

Bodies forth—Gives body or definite shape to, puts into concrete figure. Note that a distinction is made between this process and the turning into shapes (line 16). The former is purely mental—referring to the formation of thoughts, ideas, images, conceptions in the mind.

15. **The forms of things unknown**—The things may refer to history or legend, or mere fanciful creation. The poet describes them as he imagines they might have happened. Thus Homer's *Iliad* gives full details of the Trojan war, though much is manifestly unhistorical. Virgil's *Æneid* is based on a slender tradition and the poet invents the journeyings of his hero: Dante describes in minute detail hell and purgatory and heaven; Milton records the war in heaven and the movements of spirits, and the primeval paradise; Spenser invents a fairy land with knights and dragons and strange encounters. Such was the manner of poets in elder days. The unreal received form, or the unknown was minutely pictured as if the poet was describing what he had seen or heard. In the last two centuries the character of poetry has undergone a change on account of the development of the scientific spirit.

Poet's pen—By metonymy for the poet conceived as committing his thoughts to writing and elaborating his conceptions.

16. **Shapes**—Various and distinct shapes; shapes that the reader or hearer can see and realise. The shapes may be understood of kinds of worlds, or kinds of characters (demigods, satyrs, fays, goblins, &c.), or kinds of poems, or memorable descriptive phrases.

Airy nothing—Unsubstantial unreality: as in the case of fairy land and the imaginary beings of romance. Shakespeare is indicating what the poet sometimes does or may do, not what he always does; with a smile (we may suppose) upon his countenance.

17. **Local habitation and a name**—The poet localises his

creations and makes their names familiar to us; so that we speak and think of Oberon or Ariel and of their haunts and homes as if they were realities.

18. **Tricks**—Deceptive powers.

19. **Would but**—Desires only to.

Apprehend . . .**comprehends**—The distinction of these words is not quite the same as above. The force of the latter here is in its prefix *com-* which seems to have mainly its original meaning 'along with.' Imagination goes forth to understand and describe some source of joy, and in so doing it by a sort of trick unconsciously introduces some concrete person as the bringer or medium of the joy. Thus gifts of nature are associated with gods; thus there are benignant spirits, fairies, &c.; and conversely, as indicated in the next two lines.

21. **Imagining**—If (or when) one imagines. This use of the participle without a pronoun or substantive is now ungrammatical.

Fear—Object of fear. The term is thus used in Shakespeare chiefly of spirits, but it may be used as here so as to include wild men or animals.

How easy A child or timid person seeing a bush in the darkness is ready to imagine that it is a destructive animal. Cf. in SHAKESPEARE "the thief doth fear each bush an officer" (*i.e.*, a policeman), or Gray's line "they hear a voice in every wind." Some editors wish to reject lines 21-22 as uncalled for and beneath the dignity of the passage. But in the first place the lines are natural as the complement or contrast of what has been said regarding 'joy,' and secondly, it is to be remembered that Theseus is talking humorously and in high spirits. He has momentarily risen in a lofty flight, but before ending he must come back to the level of his bride and guests. Whether the trick of imagination which turns a bush into a bear is the same as that which peoples the world with gods and nymphs and fairies, and whether again these are the same as the poetic imagination are questions for the psychologist. Shakespeare need not care.

24. **All their** . . .The transfiguring of all their minds at one and the same time; referring mainly to Demetrius and Lysander. 'Minds transfigured' is Latin idiom.

25. **More witnesseth**—Affords evidence that these reports are more than mere creations of love-madness. 'Witnesseth' and 'grows' are singular because the two lines are regarded as stating one great fact. **Fancy**, as elsewhere in this play, = love. **Images** = imaginations.

26. **Great constancy**—Imposing consistency, proving that something preternatural has been at work. Constancy is literally a standing firmly together.

27. **Howsoever**—Whatever be the real facts of the case.

Admirable—Wonderful, fitted to excite wonder. Words derived from the Latin are continually changing their meanings. Thus admirable now means excellent.

29—31. Mutual congratulations.

32. **Masques dances**—Such a constituted a evening's sport in the houses of princes or nobles (*i.e.*, in England).

33. **Long age**—Cf. I. i. 3—6. Hyperbole.

34. **After-supper**—In those days dinner was always a midday meal and supper was the meal of the evening. The after-supper was a collation of sweets or something pleasant that followed the substantial supper, perhaps in another room. As dinner was followed and finished by dessert, so supper was followed by what was called rere-supper, or after-supper.

35. **Manager of mirth**—Theseus calls for Philostrate who is the officer in charge of revels and merriments; corresponding to the Master of Revels in Elizabethan England.

36. **Revels**—Entertainments. See on I. i. 19.

37. **To ease**.....Theseus affects very great impatience.

39. **Abridgment**—Used for an entertainment that shortens time. Cf. *pastime*. So also other words.

40. **Beguile**—Pass so as not to feel the slowness of.

41. **Delight**—Sport, merriment, entertainment.

42. **A brief**—A short account, a list with brief indication of the character of each. [Cf. use in 'barrister's brief'].

Ripe—Ready to be acted or performed. Ripe is Theobald's emendation of 'rife;' almost universally adopted, but doubtful. Possibly 'rife' had some shade of meaning now forgotten.

44. *The.* (*Reads*). The insertion of (reads) as an explanation is due to Theobald. According to the folios, not Theseus but Lysander announces this and the other titles, *i.e.*, reads the brief.

Centaurs—This story is told in Ovid. (Metam. XII) whence Shakespeare is supposed to have learned it. The Centaurs were imaginary monsters in Thessaly, half man, half horse (with the legs and body of horses). On one occasion they were beaten by the Lapithae, a band which included Theseus and Hercules. The conception of a centaur must date from the time when horses were first tamed and used for riding.

45. **To**—To the accompaniment of.

46. **We'll**—We shall have.

47. **In glory**—Theseus as a true hero gives all the honour to Hercules though an equal share belonged to himself.

48. **Tipsy**—Drunken. Adjective formed from 'tip' to tilt; whence also the frequentative 'tipple'; from the Scandinavian.

Bacchanals—Worshippers or devotees of Bacchus (or Dionysus), the god of wine; here a band of Thracian women. This also is in *Ovid*.

49. **Tearing** ... The reference is to the murder of Orpheus by these female bacchanals, because after the death of Eurydice, his wife, he refused to associate with them. See MILTON, *Lycidas*, 58—63; and *Par. Lost*, VII. 32—38—

> But drive far off the barbarous dissonance
> Of Bacchus and his revellers, the race
> Of that wild rout that tore the Thracian bard
> In Rhodope where woods and rocks had ears
> To rapture, till the savage clamour drowned
> Both harp and voice; nor could the Muse defend
> Her son.

Singer—Poet and musician. Orpheus is famous in legend as the supreme master of the lyre.

50. **Device**—Here used for 'play.' The term was used in various senses to denote things artfully conceived, plays, shows, emblematic designs, mottoes, &c.

51. **From Thebes**—Theseus fought against Thebes, the chief town of Boeotia, in support of Adrastus, King of Argos, who had been defeated by the Thebans. Theseus speaks with serene consciousness of heroic greatness.

52-53. **The thrice three** ... The meaning and significance of this title have been much canvassed. It is possible that there is a reference to some recent event or circumstance. In 1591 Spenser published the *Tears of the Muses*, and this title may have suggested the words 'thrice ...mourning.' The more important question is what did Shakespeare mean by 'late deceased in beggary.' It is almost certainly not a reference to the unhappy death of Spenser (1599), but many see in it an allusion to the death of Greene which took place in such circumstances in 1592. Greene was a fertile writer, who as a University man affected to despise young Shakespeare. Greene's jealousy is certain and Shakespeare may have felt responsive contempt, sufficient to induce him to make fun of his rival's untimely end. Some critics see generosity in Shakespeare's withholding this 'satire keen and critical'; but the mere reference to it would have been enough to raise

a laugh. Greene's death had been followed by a public controversy on his life; especially from the pens of Nash and Harvey, the latter of whom was 'keen and critical.' If this Comedy was produced at the time when the gossip regarding Greene was general in Society, the audience would have understood this title as indicating a new poetical and comic satire on the untoward fate of an unwise scholar and bard. The matter is discussed in connection with the question of the date of the Play.

51. **Satire**—Poetical satire as we now understand it had not yet begun in England; but the stage had been often used for personal purposes, and poems of a didactic kind had been written on the faults and falls of public men. A prose satire or series of reflections might be intended, but if the Muses were to speak it, it would be neither prose nor satire, but rather some kind of elegy. The use of the word 'satire' here is probably due to what is hinted, not to the mourning of the Muses, but to the facts which called forth that mourning. Satire arose in Latin poetry when men began to lash in verse the vices of their age. In England it began about 1600 with Marston, Hall and others, but flourished best with Dryden and Pope and culminated in Byron. Lat. *satura*, a full dish (of food) containing various ingredients.

Keen critical—Both words mean severe. Etymologically 'critical' means qualified to judge, but Shakespeare uses it in the sense of 'censorious.'

55. **Sorting with**—In harmony with. Theseus is a generous hero and will admit no mockery or satire.

56. **Tedious brief**—Bottom or Quince in giving it this title probably used the wrong word. However, it is defended and explained by Philostrate.

59. **Hot ice**—An oxymoron intended to illustrate the self-contradictory character of the title.

Flaming—A conjectural reading. *Strange*, the reading of the early editions, is almost certainly a corruption of the intended text. Its meaning is not satisfactory and a dissyllable is required. Erroneous words may have passed into the text either from the misreading of the original manuscript or the mishearing of a scribe to whom the words were being dictated. Here we expect an epithet expressive either of heat or of blackness. None, however, resembling 'strange' can be readily suggested. The original word may have begun with *f* which closely resembled the old form of *s*, and thus may have been flaming, or fiery, both of which have been suggested, or flaring.

As another example of oxymorons the following from *Romeo and Juliet*, I. i., may be quoted :—

O brawling love! O loving hate!
O anything, of nothing first create!
O heavy lightness! serious vanity!
Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health!
Still-waking sleep that is not what it is!

60. **Find the concord of this discord**—A great musician may be able to turn a discord into a concord, or to produce musical effect from it, but this is a thing of difficulty. The phrase 'concord of this discord' may be regarded as an epigram.

61. **Some ten words**—Possibly a familiar way of saying very short. Some = about. Round numbers have ever been used to denote vague quantities or periods.

63. **By ten words**—By its whole length, as it was not worth the writing and is entirely valueless.

65. **Apt**—Well adapted, appropriate.

Player fitted—Properly adapted to his part, or to whom a part suitable to his capacities has been assigned. See I. ii. 5.

68. **Which**—May be either the object after saw, or the subject before made. Probably the former. The pronoun 'it' should be supplied in one of the clauses.

69. **Merry tears**—The grotesqueness of the play and the acting prevails over the misfortunes of Pyramus and Thisbe. The figure of Oxymoron.

70. **Passion of**.....A fit of excessive laughter which might possibly cause tears.

Shed—Causative. Or, by metonymy, the action of the man may be ascribed to his mood or passion.

71. As this line is incomplete, it is possible that some words have been lost; such as "They are, my lord."

72. **Hard-handed**—Denoting the effects of manual toil.

73. **Which**—Who. The distinction was not yet established.

Laboured..... Put forth mental effort.

74. **Unbreathed**—Unpractised: a term used of the exercising of a horse or a wrestler.

75. **Against**—With a view to the coming of.

79. **Sport in their intents**—Amusement in their efforts to gratify you.

80. **Stretched, conned**—Both words agree with 'intents' and have practically the same meaning. Preparations have

been made with the utmost effort. Their minds have been stretched to the utmost, while the play has been committed to memory. The vagueness of the language is chiefly in the word 'intents' which here means strivings rather than intentions.

Cruel pain—Severe pain is called cruel, because it is experienced in a good effort.

83. **Simpleness**—Single-mindedness as seen in the intents.

Duty—Not the general ethical quality, but loyalty to the prince, homage, the exercise of respectful regard. Duty and wretchedness are examples of the abstract used for the concrete; a form of metonymy.

85. **Wretchedness**—This seems to be Hippolyta's conception of what Theseus calls simpleness. It indicates poverty, or low birth.

O'ercharged—Over-burdened, as indicated in line 80.

86. **In his service perishing**—Failing in the task it has undertaken. His = its. The very fact that this play is the offering of duty or loyalty will make the mismanagement of it more painful.

87. **Sweet**—Dear, sweetheart.

88. **Can do nothing**... Have no skill in this respect.

89. **The kinder we**—By so much is it kinder on our part—'the' being the instrumental case. The words 'kind' and 'nothing' are repeated from Hippolyta's speech, as a method of wit in dialogue. On account of the Inversion the verb does not need to be expressed.

90. **Sport**—Amusement, the interest of the play to us.

Take what they mistake—Accept their blundering utterances. Cf. lines 100—103. The repetition of the syllable take is of the nature of a pun or play on language.

91. **Cannot do**—Fails in the ability to do.

92. **Noble respect**—The respect felt by the prince for the sincerity of the mechanics. Noble is in contrast to 'poor.' These words are in the early editions the end of line 91. The substantive without the adjective would have fitly completed that line.

Takes The meaning seems to be: accepts it not for its merit or skill, but for the good will of the performers. **Might can** scarcely be the correct reading. One or two syllables are wanting in the couplet, so that the true text seems lost.

93. Theseus is now recounting experiences in the receipt of addresses from distinguished men, or bodies of men.

Clerks—Scholars, learned men; the clerical profession (clergy) having been in the Middle Ages the only learned

class. Shakespeare has, perhaps, in view some instances in the experience of Queen Elizabeth.

94. **Premeditated welcome**—Speeches of welcome prepared beforehand.

95. **Shiver and look pale**—Being overcome with nervousness.

96. **Periods**—In the grammatical sense of full stops, not the rhetorical sense.

97. **Throttle their** .. The persons presenting the addresses are supposed to have practised the delivery or elocution thereof so as to reveal as cultured and courtly an accent as possible; but in their timidity they prove unable to speak distinctly, and thus as it were choke their finely-trained utterance.

98 **Have broke**—The construction is imperfect; probably 'they' being understood as the subject before have. 'Broke' would now be written 'broken.'

100. **Picked**—That is by regarding the intention and respecting the modesty or humbleness of the persons.

101. **Fearful**—Full of fear that they should not properly fulfil the duties assigned to them, timid and reverential.

102. **Read**—Discerned.

Rattling tongue—Bold and fluent utterance. Cf. 'to rattle off' a set speech.

Saucy—Pert, smart, spoken with a sense of cleverness. Originally, what has sauce Cf. spicy.

104. **Love**—Used instead of duty of line 83, meaning devotion to. **Tongue-tied** dumb. **Simplicity**, the simpleness of line 83.

105. **In least speak most**—Show in their few words more loyalty and affection than fluent orators do in their long speeches. The expression is epigrammatic. Cf. the Latin phrase *multum in parvo*.

To my capacity—According to my power of judging.

106. **So please**—If it so please; may it please.

Prologue—Lit. fore-speech; a sort of preface preceding the play. Here the term is used (as was the custom) of the person that spoke the prologue.

Addressed—Ready.

Enter the Prologue; QUINCE. The person who spoke the Prologue appeared in a long black velvet coat with a garland of bay. The appearance of Quince in this character is supposed to imply that he is to be regarded as the author of the play (or as a special representative of the author).

108—117. The comic effect of this first part of the prologue is in the mis-punctuation which must be supposed to repre-

sent the manner in which it was spoken. The mis-placing of the stops makes the prologue utter independence or defiance rather than obedience and homage. Quince is like a school-boy who repeats what he does not know the meaning of and pauses at the wrong places. To obtain the meaning the full stops at the end of lines 108, 112 and in the middle of lines 110, 114, 115 must be removed. Full stops or semi-colons should be placed at the end of lines 109, 115 and after 'come' in line 113. It has been pointed out that a similar distortion by mis-punctuation is to be found in the earliest English comedy, *Ralph Roister Doister*, where Ralph is proposing marriage to dame Custance.

108. **Offend**—Cf. below line 408.

111. **Beginning end**—A play on words. 'End' here means object, purpose, design. Line 110 shows the beginning or origin of their design and line 114 expresses the full motive and intention, viz., all for your delight.

112 **Consider** Believe then that it is not in despite (or for annoyance) that we have come. So line 115.

113. **Content**—Satisfy. Inasmuch as our mind or purpose is to satisfy you our true intention is solely to give you delight.

115. **Repent you**—Repent, *i.e.*, of having received us; as the Court party would if the affair proved a failure.

116. **Show**—Appearance.

117. **Like**—Likely.

118. **Stand upon points**—A play on the word 'points.' The usual meaning of the phrase is 'stand upon ceremonies,' be punctilious in little things. Here 'points' refers to the punctuation

119. **He hath** He has ridden his prologue as if it were a wild untrained young horse. Lysander introduces this metaphor of riding in order to make his pun which is on the word 'stop' which has a meaning in horsemanship as well as in grammar.

120. **Moral**—The moral is to speak *true*. Truth is required in all details of utterance or execution. Wrong punctuation may have the effect of untruth. Lysander seems eager to commend himself to Theseus.

122. **Played on** . Hippolyta too tries to shine in dialogue. The word 'stop' suggests to her a musical instrument and she introduces a metaphor of her own ('played on') and a simile ('like.. ').

123. **Recorder**—An old musical instrument akin to the flute, now succeeded by the flageolet. It was of various kinds

and sizes, the text showing that it could be used by a child. It took the name 'recorder' from its upper part "between the hole below the mouth and the highest hole for the finger." Milton makes the devils march "In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood of flutes and soft recorders." (*Paradise Lost*, I. 551). Its soft music was said to approximate to vocal music. See *Hamlet*, III. ii. 372.

A sound .....government—A sound but not musical, because the stops are not properly played on. Government is regulation, producing harmony.

124. **Like a tangled chain**—Theseus ends the conversation with another simile. The entangled or disordered chain requires only unravelling, and so the prologue requires only new punctuation.

At this point the first folio has the stage-direction *Tawyer with a Trumpet before them. Tawyer* is identified with William Tawier, a 'subordinate in the pay of Hemmings.' Probably he was the *Presenter* who introduced the characters, and consequently the speaker of lines 126—150 which are wrongly assigned to Quince (or Prologue).

126. This speech gives a summary of the part to be acted. Throughout there seems to be covert satire of the pretensions of literary contemporaries.

Gentles—Gentlemen and gentlewomen.

127. **Truth**—This may be called mock heroic.

129. **Certain**—This word was often used with the accent on the second syllable for the sake of rhyme and in various shades of meaning. Shakespeare is here ridiculing this use of it. It is also ludicrous that Flute should be so emphatically pronounced to be Thisbe.

130. **Lime**—The early editions have lyme; but below (l.160) and also in III. 1, the word is loam.

135. **Dog**—The man in the moon was supposed to be followed by a dog as well as to be carrying a bush or bundle.

137. **Think no scorn**—Did not disdain, or deem it beneath them. Cf. *Esther*, III. 6.

138. **Grisly**—Hideous, terrible. A.S. *grysliċ*.

Hight by name—The expression is tautological. Hight = is named. This is supposed to be the only passive form now existing in the English language (*i.e.*, passive without the auxiliary verb, be). The word was practically obsolete in Shakespeare's time, but occurs frequently in Spenser's *Fairy Queen* (1590). It is possible that Shakespeare is thus ridiculing Spenser's affectation of antique words and forms. 'Grisly' also is a Spenserian word.

Fall—The meaning is let fall. This transitive use was not infrequent. Cf. *Tempest*, II. i. 287; V. i. 64.

Thisby's mantle slain—This may be grammatically explained as the mantle of Thisby slain.

145-46. The boisterous alliterations of these two lines are doubtless in ridicule of the manner of some of Shakespeare's theatrical contemporaries, or, perhaps, of Spenser himself who abounds in alliteration and whose combats contain such words as blade, blame, breast, bloody. The omission of articles is another satirical touch.

Broached—Opened. Used strictly of tapping a cask of liquor (with a spit or iron instrument). Here the heart's blood is drawn.

147. **Mulberry shade**—Under the shade of a mulberry tree. Doubtless the black mulberry is intended. The first syllable is derived from the Latin name *morus*.

148. More alliteration. **Died**—is a euphemism for killed herself. This emphatic style is intended to resemble something grand.

150. **At large discourse**—Talk freely.

Many asses do—A suggestion that biped asses are numerous.

Interlude—A technical term of the time; especially applied to short comical or farcical pieces, in the age immediately preceding the rise of the great drama.

Crannied hole—A cranny is a hole or chink (Fr. *cran*, Lat. *crena*, a notch); crannied therefore seems properly an epithet of the wall as in Tennyson's "flower in the crannied wall;" it indicates the nature of the hole as small or narrow.

158. **Pyr'mus, Thisby**—The first name is pronounced as a dissyllable; the second is accented on the second syllable.

160. **This**—In each case pointing to the object.

162. **Sinister**—Left. Accented on the middle syllable and giving a sort of double rhyme.

163. **Fearful**—Timid; because they meet secretly, and without permission.

Lime and hair—Elements of the plaster or rough-cast. See line 188.

164. **Wittiest partition**. . Partitions, *i.e.*, thin walls or divisions between rooms do not usually talk or show wit. There is, however, a play on the double meanings of partition and discourse, a side-reference to the partitions (or sub-divisions) of discourses and sermons which were carried to excess in Shakespeare's time and were not always 'witty.'

168. **O**—These apostrophes to night and wall, with repeti-

tions, are doubtless intended in mimicry or ridicule of some author or some school of authors.

Grim-looked—Grim-looking; not incorrectly formed from the subst. 'look,' but the style is here held up to ridicule.

169. **Ever art** ... A good example of bathos or the art of sinking (as Pope called it). Compare and contrast the Miltonic line denying the substantiality of night: Privation mere of light and absent day. (*P.R.*, IV. 400.)

Ground—Land, property.

175. **Blink**—Peep, look with the eyes half-shut in adaptation to the size of the chink.

178. **O wicked**—The sharp contrast of this and the preceding lines (172—6) is comical.

180. **Sensible**—Endowed with sense; as shown by its having already spoken.

Again—Back, in return.

181. **No**—This speech of Bottom's is supposed to be extemporised in answer to Theseus, and is in Bottom's pompous manner of explanation (where explanations should not be given). The speaking of it illustrates his vain, ignorant, and irrepressible character

Pat—Exactly. See III. i. 2.

188. **Cherry**—Red (like the cherry fruit). See III. ii. 209

189-90. **See, hear**—These words are transposed in Bottom's manner.

Will I—I shall go.

191. In this line the early editions have the comma after 'art.' It seems much better to punctuate as in the text.

192. **Lover's grace**—Gracious (or honourable) lover.

193-4. **Limander, Helen**—Apparently for Leander, Hero. The story of Leander and Hero was the subject of a poem of Marlowe's, unfinished when he died, 1593. Leander was wont to swim across the Hellespont from Abydos to Sestos to visit Hero. Finally he was drowned in a storm and the lady threw herself into the sea.

194. **Fates**—Greek divinities, goddesses who presided over birth and life. Their names are Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos. The Romans called them *Parcae*; the Greeks, *Moirai* and other names. Atropos was the one that cut the thread of life.

195. **Shafalus**—For Cephalus, son of Hermes. He refused the love of Aurora.

Procrus—Procris, wife of Cephalus, daughter of Erechtheus, king of Athens.

199. **Ninny's tomb**—See III. i. 8.

200. **Tide life, tide death**—Whether life or death betide

(*i.e.*, befall). Tide is not a contraction of betide, but an alternative form now obsolete.

203. **Moral down**—This is the folio reading and it is doubtless correct. The quartos had "Now is the moon used between," the meaning of which would seem to be: Now since the partition is removed the neighbouring lovers can see each other freely in the moonlight. They will not need to peer through a cranny or to carry a lantern. This we may suppose Shakespeare changed to 'moral down,' the meaning being that the wall which was a sort of moral protection between the two ardent lovers is now removed. One point, however, which has not been noted is that one of the young men had already used the word 'moral,' and it is to them (apparently) that Theseus now turns to say that a 'moral' is removed; to which Demetrius promptly replies, no remedy, *i.e.*, it can't be helped. Another point has been suggested. Moral was pronounced long and nearly the same as 'mure all' (*i.e.*, wall entirely), and Shakespeare may have indulged in another atrocious pun. The reading 'mural' is certainly wrong, but the word 'moral' must be held to imply 'wall.'

204. **No remedy**—This phrase must refer not to the loss of the wall, but to the free communication that results from its removal.

When walls ... There is supposed to be a reference to a proverb 'walls have ears,' meaning that a person behind a wall may overhear confidential conversation.

205. **Without warning**—Without giving warning; *i.e.*, while the speaker is unguarded. On this account walls deserve to be removed.

As applied directly to the Interlude Demetrius refers to the wilfulness of Snout (who acts Wall) and his listening to the conversation of Pyramus and Thisbe so as to hear of their arrangement to meet at the tomb. It is the hearing of this that enables him to know that he may now withdraw.

206. **This is** ... Hippolyta with her refined tastes cannot appreciate this rude and grotesque diversion. *This* = the play or interlude.

207. **The best in this kind** ... The best of dramatic representations are but shadows, *i.e.*, unreal imitations of reality.

208. **The worst are no worse**—They also are shadows cast by reality. In such shadows there is no substantiality and therefore no qualitative difference. Either may afford an hour's amusement.

If imagination amend them—The imagination of the

spectator (which is what invests the action with life and reality) may be used so as to supply what is lacking in the work of unskilled players.

209. **It must be**.....Hippolyta sees that these players have no true imagination. Perhaps she means to compliment her lord. Shakespeare further suggests that all high appreciation is dependent on the activity of the hearer's mind.

210. **If we imagine**—Theseus plays on the word 'imagine,' while at the same time he makes known his consciousness of the extraordinary conceit of Bottom and his friends. He speaks as if desirous of changing the subject and of seeing some new development which may be more interesting to his bride.

212. **Two noble beasts in. a man and a lion**—Most editors put the comma after in, connecting 'in' with come and putting man and lion in apposition to beasts. In the early editions the comma is placed before 'in' in which case the preposition may mean 'in the character of'; cf. 'in Pyramus,' IV. ii. 240. 'Man' was changed by Theobald and others into 'moon.' This is quite unauthorised, but the remark (adopted by Furness) that Theseus could not know that the man with the lantern was the personation of moonshine is in forgetfulness of lines 134-5. No one has remarked on the fact that a dog, as well as a lion, enters. Theseus speaks somewhat sensationally in his endeavour to interest Hippolyta in the performance, but it is not clear that a man could be called a beast, even with the epithet 'noble' attached. Of course if the man is so styled it is intended as a joke.

214. **Monstrous**—Shakespeare is again ridiculing some literary style.

On floor—Article omitted; in the manner of Spenser. So 'lion,' I. 216.

218. **A lion fell**—Apparently fell here means skin (a use of the word now obsolete, but found elsewhere in Shakespeare), and lion-fell is to be taken as one word; the meaning of the sentence being,—I am only a lion-skin and in no other sense can I produce a lion, or do I belong to the race of lions. The double negative, nor... .no, was not unusual. It is to be noted that Snug is here carrying out the instructions laid down in Bottom's speech, Act III. i., according to which he was to name his name and show his human head through the lion's neck, and to declare that he was not a lion. These points are observed in due order, and the phrase 'a lion-fell' is the spoken equivalent of the showing of the face through the torn skin. It is usual to take 'fell' as an adjective, and

to interpret, 'neither a lion nor a lioness'; but the alternative is a feeble one, and the grammatical difficulty of commencing the line gratuitously with 'A' instead of 'No' is in our opinion insuperable. If 'fell' is a substantive, it is rhetorically balanced with 'dam'; and both clauses of the sentence become full of meaning. The speaker is a lion's dam only in the sense that a lion's skin encloses one who is to act the part of a lion. Fell, etymologically, = Latin *pellis*.

220. **Pity on my life**—I should be very sorry indeed. The folio reading is 'of,' the quartos have 'on.' Cf. III. i. 40. 'Of' seems to have been the form used in vulgar speech.

221. **Of a good**—Possessed of a. The gentleness and goodness are shown in his anxiety not to terrify the party.

222. **Best at a beast**—The best possible in the case of, or character of, a beast. This epigrammatic form owes its point largely to the pronunciation of 'beast' which was nearly the same as that of best. The combination *ea* took its sound primarily from the first letter which if long was pronounced as in 'there,' or if short as in 'then.' The current pronunciation of *ea* is not much older than this century. With 'obey' Pope rhymed 'tea' and Cowper 'sea.' The older vowel sound of beast (still heard provincially) is familiar enough in Indian languages though in literary English it has ceased to exist.

223. **Fox**—*i.e.*, a cowardly animal who trusts to cunning rather than to valour for success or safety. Snug tried to calm the spectators, but the effect of his explanation has not been what he counted on. They did not expect gentleness in a lion.

224. **Goose**—*i.e.*, fool. The explanation showed want of discretion (or judgment) and also (as a modern writer would say) want of humour. Geese and hens are supposed to have little brains. This use of the terms fox, goose is the figure Antonomasia; or it may be deemed, Metaphor.

225. **His valour cannot**—Theseus had virtually said he has no discretion. Oh yes replies Demetrius, he has a great deal of a kind, a coward's kind. He has so much of it that it is too heavy for his valour to carry. Now foxes are in the habit of carrying geese (away). It is possible that the words discretion and valour were a familiar contrast. The saying in *1 Henry IV* (V. iv. 121) 'discretion is the better part of valour' may have been already in some form in Shakespeare's mind. According to it a wise man's valour carries his discretion in it. But the valour of this lion is non-existent and does not carry such discretion as may be assigned to him.

227. **His discretion** . . .Theseus as sovereign cannot be

expected to argue with a subordinate. He assumes the correctness of the comparisons, gives a turn to the argument, and then passes to another subject. But in all his speeches he displays an element of generosity.

230. **Lantern**—Shakespeare wrote lanthorn and seems in this and the following four lines to be playing on the syllable *horn*; so that the word must have been pronounced as written. This form of lantern was due to the frequent use of horn in the construction of its sides.

Horned—Used of the crescent or waning moon, the ends or points being known as the horns. So Lat. *cornua*. Here the epithet is introduced conventionally and ludicrously.

231. **He**—The man and not the lamp being jocularly regarded as the moon. If he is 'horned,' the horns should be seen on his head.

232. **No crescent and**...Theseus sees only a round light. There are therefore no horns, and the moon is full, not crescent.

234-35. These two lines seem the beginning of a quatrain, but Moon does not succeed in uttering more.

235. **Man i' the moon**—The old spelling *i' th* shows (what the metre here requires) that the phrase "in the" constituted practically one syllable. So in the Elizabethan age generally. For this mythological man, cf. *The Tempest*, II. ii.

Do—As in the quartos and as is required by modern grammar. The folios have 'doth,' an erroneous correction as if to agree with 'man.'

236. **Of all the rest**—The words 'the rest' are incorrectly added. The effect is to produce a union of two constructions—greatest of all, greater than all the rest. This combination was recognised by the Greeks as a figure of speech. Cf. in *Milton*: "the fairest of her daughters, Eve."

237. **Into the lantern**—Theseus has become very jocular. Of course either the light in the lantern, or the whole thing (including the man) must be regarded as the moon.

239. **For the candle**—Another witticism implying that the light is not burning brightly. The snuff is the part of the candle wick already burned and needing to be cleared off. A candle in snuff has usually a disagreeable odour. Johnson pointed out that 'in snuff' means also in hasty anger. It is possible though not certain that a double meaning is intended.

240. **Aweary**—As in the first quarto. 'Aweary' is a Shakespearian form of 'weary.' The folios have 'weary.'

Would he would change—I greatly wish that he would change. The pronoun 'he' is used because of the man;

'change' is used as a technical term regarding the moon, but simply for 'go away.' Hippolyta tries to be witty in her impatience.

242. **Small light of discretion**—A double reference to the bad candle and the man's stupidity; perhaps also to some familiar idea or expression of the time. Cf. *L. L. L.*, V. ii. 734, 'little hole of discretion.'

243. **In the wane**—Therefore changing, as Hippolyta desires. We now say 'on the wane.'

244. **Reason**—Reasonableness.

Stay the time—Wait patiently until the moon's course is finished, until it has completely waned and disappeared. 'Stay' is probably 'intrans.' and 'time' an accusative of time.

247. **Lantern is the moon**—This speech which illustrates the speaker's small discretion inevitably produces Demetrius' reply in next sentence. What he means by the clauses in detail is that here is a complete representation of the ordinary ideas of the Moon. Here is the man with his bundle and his dog.

250. **They are in the**—According to the old vulgar explanations of the appearances seen on the moon. Demetrius' criticism (though he but follows Theseus) is quite correct, and a blunder of the players is thus ridiculed. It is also shown that a strictly literal representation (such as the mechanics propose) is impossible.

258. **Mousèd**—Shaken, torn, as a cat catches and tears a mouse. Referring to the tearing of Thisby's mantle. This verb 'mouse' elsewhere found in Shakespeare is now obsolete, though 'a good mouser' is used of a cat.

259. **And then**..... This and the next line are transposed by some recent editors; but surely Shakespeare means the withdrawal of the 'lion' to be due to the sound of Pyramus' footsteps or to the sight of him. This we take to be the meaning of 'And so.' The past tenses are probably due to the knowledge Demetrius and Lysander already possess of the story, so that they anticipate what is coming.

261. **Sunny beams**—The application of 'sunny' to the moon is worthy of Bottom; all the more grotesque that the moon is represented by a dim candle.

263. **Gleams**—The early editions have beams, but it is not likely that Shakespeare would have made even Bottom use the same word twice in rhyme. The second folio corrected to streams (i.e., rays); whether conjecturally or according to evidence is not known. The change to gleams—suggested by the alliteration—is due to Knight. The next line also

shows that Shakespeare is ridiculing alliteration. It is just possible that he may have used 'beams' twice in ridicule of repeated rhymes which were frequent in Italian and are occasional in Spenser (though usually such repetitions represent different meanings). If 'streams' were an authorised emendation, we should prefer to put it in the former line with 'sunny.'

264. **Taste**... **Thisby's**—The quartos have *take*.... ..*Thisby*; but the folio reading seems more appropriate to Bottom as well as more alliterative.

265. **Stay**—Stop. At this point he sees the lost mantle.

266. **Knight**—That is Pyramus himself; **poor** = unfortunate.

267. **Dreadful dole—Awful** (source of) sorrow, or lamentation. O.F. *doel*; Scotch *dool*.

270. **Dainty duck**—Delicious darling. 'Duck' is a lover's term of endearment; 'dainty' refers primarily to the palate though it is used also of prettiness or elegance. Here it seems to follow taste. There is possibly also a brutal pun as 'duck' is a delicacy of the table.

273. **Furies fell**—Fierce goddesses, deemed the ministers of vengeance in the underworld; called by the Latins *furiæ*, or *diræ*; by the Greeks *Eumenides* or *Erinnyes*. They were usually reckoned three,—Tisiphone, Megara, Alecto. It is supposed that Shakespeare is here ridiculing a passage similar to this in Edwards' *Damon and Pythias* (1582).

275. **Thread and Thrum**—More alliteration; the phrase being expressive of completeness. 'Thrum' is a weavers' term for an end of the thread, "the tufted part beyond the tie at the end of the warp, in weaving." Atropos, one of the Fates, was supposed to cut with a scissors the thread of life. Life was metaphorically conceived as a tissue of thread spun and determined by the Fates.

276. **Quail** .. .**quell**—Alliterative. Quail is inaccurately used transitively. Quell is the old causal of 'quail' and often meant to kill (as here); later to subdue or silence.

277. **Passion**—Exhibition of mental suffering.

278. **Near to**—The expression is humorous, due to the unreality and grotesqueness of the 'passion.' The coupling of 'passion' such as Bottom's and the supposed 'death of a dear friend' is comical and nearly (but not altogether) produces sadness. Theseus is sarcastic. The phrase "the death of a dear friend" occurs notably in Scott's *Marmion*, III. 13.

279. **Beshrew**—Curse. Hippolyta is somewhat overcome by the theatrical display.

281. **Deflowered**—Destroyed the beauty of. The word is intentionally not very appropriate.

282. **No, no**—The correction is intended to be ludicrous.

283. **Liked**—An anti-climax or bathos; partly for the alliteration.

284. **Tears**—The apostrophe to 'tears' as it they could confound or kill the man is ludicrous, but part of the show is to produce tears so as to render the self-destroying valour grotesque.

288. **Hop**—Palpitate. We may suppose that in his emotion Bottom feels his heart leaping against his ribs.

289. **Thus, thus, thus**—He gives three stabs.

292. **In the sky**—An anticipation, as he is not yet quite dead.

293. **Tongue**—Supposed by Capell and others to be Bottom's blunder for sun. This might correspond with moon. But it is not likely that at night Bottom would address the sun; nor does the sun lose its light when a man dies. A better emendation would be 'eye.' But we believe the explanation is that 'moon' and 'tongue' are transposed as 'see' and 'hear' **below** (l. 339). On this view Bottom says "Moon lose thy light," thus instructing Moonshine to disappear or to put out the candle; then he adds "Tongue take thy flight," by which he means that he will speak no more. Elze puts 'Moon' in both lines which though good sense is bad poetry.

294. **Moon take** See preceding note. In the opinion of Pyramus, who thinks Thisbe dead, the moon is no longer needed. [The reference is to stage requirement rather than to the mysterious sympathy of nature or even to the inability of Pyramus again to behold the heavens.]

295. **No die but an ace**—The only cast of the die for him is an ace. This seems a very poor pun on 'die,' unless 'die' had some shade of meaning now forgotten. There is something unexplained. 'Ace' is a unit, originally of money; used of both cards and dice.

298. **Surgeon**—To tie up his wounds. The original form of the word was chirurgeon; Gr. *cheir*, the hand, *ergein*, to work.

299. **Ass**—Not an ace, but an ass; a play on the sound and a description of Bottom.

300. **How chance** ....How does it happen that... Hippolyta is looking forward to the action of Thisbe on the discovery of her loss. For construction, cf. I. ii. 129.

Moonshine—The light, not necessarily the man.

303. **Her passion ends**—Theseus informs the weary Hip-

polyta that the play will soon be over. Like Demetrius and Lysander above, he is supposed to know the order and nature of the parts (indicated in the Presenter's speech, lines 126—150, and possibly told from the rehearsal). 'Passion,' here also, indicates display or paroxysm of grief.

304. **A long one**—*i.e.*, a long passion; *i.e.*, a lengthened utterance of regret.

305. **Such a**—So worthless a.

Brief—Hippolyta's patience is exhausted.

306. **Mote**—The slightest weight. The original text is moth. See on name of fairy, III. i.

Which Pyramus which—Whether Pyramus or; *i.e.*, the one is as bad as the other. This use of 'which' is very unusual, probably due to the desire of brevity; apparently for "which of the two (Pyramus) or."

307. **He for a man**.....This second half of Demetrius' speech is omitted in the folios, probably because in some way objectionable. Collier suggested that it was due to the Statute restraining the use of the name of God. The meaning here of 'God warrant us,' 'God bless us' is obscure. Staunton conjectured that these phrases were compound words euphemistically expressing something opprobrious; as if the meaning were such as: he for a murderer, she for a witch. 'Warrant' is an emendation of the quarto text which is *warnd*, and which some would read 'ward.'

309. **Those sweet eyes**—Does Lysander remember the phrase from the lament that follows? The play had been in the hands of Philostrate. Perhaps the phrase is simply due to its conventionality.

310. **Means**—Makes moan. Since Theobald 'means' has often been changed into moans, but the early texts are unanimous. Jamieson's Scotch Dictionary is quoted as giving 'Mene, Meane, to make lamentations.' In Anglo-Saxon however the verb was *maenan*, and in Mid. Eng. *menen*. This word became obsolete and was replaced by a new verb 'moan' derived from the substantive; but the old pronunciation would have been known to Shakespeare, and indeed it still lingers in the provinces (*i.e.*, as *manes*).

Videlicet—As follows. Usually written, viz.; from Latin *videre licet*, one may see.

317. **These lily lips. This cherry nose**—As the lament is in rhyme, there is probably some corruption of the text here. Collier's manuscript is possibly right in reading, This lily lip, this cherry tip (tip being the nose to which she points as she speaks). Farmer suggested a change in the order of the

words: These lips lily, This nose cherry; where the adjectives are accented on the second syllable. The meaning is undoubted. Theobald suggested a bad rhyme, lily brows (which is not even funny if he meant white eyebrows); but on no account can we give up the red nose and the white lips any more than the green eyes or yellow cheeks. These complete the picture of Bully Bottom, if not of Thisbe's lover.

320. **Are gone**—It is Pyramus that is gone. The parts enumerated are used by synecdoche for the person to whom they belong and of whom they are characteristic.

323. **Sisters Three**—The Fates, to all of whom the work of Atropos is here assigned. It is pointed out that this phrase occurs in Edwards' *Damon and Pythias* which Shakespeare may be burlesquing. The names of the other two were Clotho and Lachesis.

326. **Lay them in gore**—Imbrue them in my blood.

328. **Shears**—The classic instrument of Atropos. Cf. MILTON, *Lycidas*, 73—

Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears,

But in *Arcades*, 65, he assigns to the three (as here) the 'vital shears.'

Thread of silk—The silken thread is symbolical of the excellence of the life of her gentle lover. The word silk, Old English *seolc*, is connected with Latin *sericum* from Greek *Seres*, the Chinese.

331. **Imbrue**—Used for alliteration, not very correctly. Imbrue is to drench; from the same root as beverage (Latin *bibere*).

335. **Are left**—Are alive. Theseus does not mention Quince (the prologue) and Wall. The choice is made for comic effect. Demetrius adds Wall, which draws from Bottom a characteristic correction.

337. **Bot.**—This speech is in the quartos assigned to Lion (*i.e.*, Snug), but it is in keeping with the play that Bottom should arise and that his tongue should come back. Perhaps Shakespeare authorised the change.

338. **See, hear**—Transposed, in Bottom's manner.

Epilogue—The epilogue is recited after the end as the prologue is before the beginning. Neither strictly belongs to the play.

339. **Bergomask dance**—The dance was named from Bergamo, a district in Italy, and it is said that in Italy the dance was named Bergamasca. The spelling, therefore, may have no reference to the English word masque. It was a rude rustic dance.

342. **Never excuse**—Although the reference is strictly only to this play, Theseus may be half enunciating the worldly maxim: never apologise; who excuses himself accuses himself.

345. **In Thisby's garter**—If the poet had come forward at the end and hanged himself with Thisbe's garter, there would have been an appropriate winding up. That is to say, the play is so poor that the author of it might be allowed to kill himself. Theseus does not explain how he could have survived the acting of Pyramus. But such incongruity may be part of the wit.

346. **Notably discharged**—Complimentary thanks to the actors.

348. **Iron tongue**—The bell. **Told**, counted.

349. **Fairy time**—Time when the fairies are abroad, when they come forth to practise their midnight dances.

351. **Overwatched**—Kept awake beyond the proper time. 'Watch,' which had not originally a *t* is derived from wake.'

352. **Palpable gross**—Not spiritual, or intellectual or imaginative. It is so for two reasons—the representation of material things, wall, and moon, and lion; and the vulgarity of the characters.

353. **Gate**—We think editors are wrong in changing this to 'gait' which is a word with a specific meaning not intended here. 'Gate' in the general sense of movement was once in frequent use and is still kept up in Scotland and the north of England. It is frequent in BURNS. Primarily it meant street or way. It is the Scandinavian word corresponding to the ordinary word 'gate.' Heavy gate = slow movement.

354. **A fortnight** Some such sport we shall have every evening for a fortnight. **This solemnity** is the marriage festival.

New—Philostrate must provide a new entertainment for each evening. Here the drama ends, except the fairy show and epilogue.

Puck—According to the Collier manuscript, Puck enters 'with a broom on his shoulder.'

356. **Now**—At midnight; the characteristic fairy time.

Hungry—The idea is taken from *Psalm*, CIV. 20-21; not from English experience; but it enhances the feeling of mystery.

357. **Behowls the moon**—Folios and quartos have 'beholds'; probably a compositor's error. In *As You Like It*, V. ii, wolves are referred to as "howling against the moon."

Cf. in *Julius Cæsar*, "I had rather be a dog and bay the moon." The emendation here is due to Warburton. Behowls = howls at or against.

359. **All with** .... Weary and quite exhausted with labour. For- in **for-done** is intensive; cf. forlorn. **Weary** is either by hypallage transferred from ploughman to task, or is equivalent to wearisome, tiring.

360. **Brands**—Logs of wood that have been burning for fire.

361. **Screech-owl**—The owl, a bird of evil omen, has a screeching or shrieking cry.

362. **Wretch**—Unfortunate person. So in GRAY'S Ode to Vicissitude, "The wretch that long has tost on the thorny bed of pain."

363. **Shroud**—Death sheet. Puck has no delicate feelings.

364—7. The popular belief regarding ghosts.

365. **Graves**—Absolute case: **gaping** = opening, or open

366. **Every one**—Each grave. The ghosts come forth and move about till dawn when they return "each fettered ghost into his several grave" (Milton's *Hymn*).

369. **By the** . Accompanying the moon.

Triple Hecate's team—Hecate is the goddess *triformis* (three-shaped): known in the heavens as the Moon, on earth as Diana, in the underworld as Proserpine or Hecate. 'Team' is the usual description of the heavenly bodies as chariots drawn by animals. A team is a group of horses or other animals. Milton makes Hecate ride in a cloudy ebon chair (*Comus*, 134). Her team consisted of a black and a white horse. Hecate is properly a trisyllable, but it is used as a dissyllable in *Marlowe* and in *Milton*: and so here.

370. **From the**—See on IV. i. 93.

371. **Like a dream**—As a dream comes only in the darkness. Puck classes himself with dreams. Elsewhere *(Tempest)* Shakespeare says of all men, "We are such stuff as dreams are made of." In this play Shakespeare desires us to regard the fairies and all their doings as of the nature of dreams. Cf. IV. i. 197, 203.

372. **Frolic**—Playful. It is our time of sport. 'Frolic' is now generally a subst. and frolicsome is a new adj.

374. **With broom**—Sweeping the house was one of the tasks supposed to be performed by Robin. See II. i. He has particularly to see that no dust is left at the back of the door.

376. **Through** . ...The meaning seems to be that in the dark quiet room there will be sufficient light from the decaying embers to enable spectators to see the bright fairies flit-

ting from place to place. It is possible that the fairies are conceived of as self-luminous; but more probably the brightness is due to shining garments. Milton calls them "yellow-skirted." **Glimmering** probably combines the ideas of faint and moving. Instead of 'through' White suggested 'though' as if the meaning were: Although the light from the faded fire is faint, yet the fairies are to hop as easily as if it were full moonlight. But note that 'through' is twice repeated.

377. **Dead and drowsy**—Dull and sleepy, but not extinct.

380. **Ditty**—Song. (O.F. *dite*, a poem; Lat. *dictatum*, *dicere*). Oberon leads his company in singing a song which is not to be found in the text, and which it may have baffled Shakespeare to write. The singing is of course accompanied by dancing.

381. **Dance it trippingly**—Cf. Milton's "trip it as you go, On the light fantastic toe" (*L'Allegro*, 33). The 'it' is expletive. Trippingly is what Shakespeare elsewhere calls 'featly.' 'Foot it featly;' *Tempest*, I. ii. 379.

Tita.—After Oberon has finished Titania comes forward. Johnson supposed that she presented herself with another song and to lead another dance; but the point is not clear. There is no distinct reference to two songs, and IV. i. 88-89 indicates that the king and queen are to join together in the same dance.

382. **First**—Before beginning the hopping.

By rote—By memory. Lit. in a beaten track. Akin to 'route.' Lat. *rumpere*.

383. **Warbling note**—Musical accompaniment

384. **Hand in hand**—Hands joined in dance.

385. **Sing and bless**—They bless by the charm of the song and by the dance.

After this Capell added as a stage-direction *Song and Dance.* In the early editions there is no direction. In the folio, the speech of Oberon that follows was put in italics and described as the song. It is clear that the folio is wrong. At least the last line can be spoken only by Oberon and there is no reason to doubt that the quartos are right in regarding the whole as a speech of Oberon. It contains his instructions to his train.

389. **Blessed be**—In imitation of the custom that still prevailed of clergymen blessing beds to keep away from wedded couples all terrors of the night—ghosts and dreams, &c.

390. **Create**—This form of the past part. was once frequent in words derived from the Latin.

394. **Blots**—Such as are specified in the following lines.

Of nature's hand—Due to natural and uncontrollable causes.

396. **Mole**—A mark on the skin; a dark-coloured spot often on the face.

Hare-lip—A divided upper lip, supposed to resemble the lip of a hare.

Scar—A mark such as remains when a wound is healed.

397. **Mark prodigious**—Anything preternatural or abnormal.

398. **Despised in nativity**—Since these deformities were supposed to be due to the influence of witches or spirits they were anticipated with dread and regarded as things to be ashamed of. "In nativity" means existing from birth; not subsequently contracted.

400. **Field-dew consecrate**—Oberon uses dew as priests used 'holy water.'

401. **Take his gate**—Again we object to the change of *gate* into 'gait.' There is no reference whatever to manner of movement. The phrase simply means start, begin to move. Cf. Burns' *Tam O' Shanter* where in the opening lines the phrase is used of beginning to return from the market.

402. **Several chamber**—Separate room. 'Chamber' is ultimately from Lat. *camera*, a vault or room.

403. **With sweet peace**—This is the blessing, including both domestic and public peace.

404. **Of it blest**—Of it after it has been blest. Lines 404, 405 are transposed as recommended by White, Staunton and others. There seems no doubt that this is the simple explanation. Rowe proposed: 'Ever shall it safely rest'—a double emendation and therefore not at all probable.

405. **Meet me**—Cf. II. i. 267; ii. 84.

Break of day—Dawn.

409. *Puck*—This speech is the epilogue of the play. Puck refers in it not only to the matter of the fifth Act, but also and mainly to the experiences of the lovers in Acts II, III and IV. And he asks for pardon and approval or applause, in the usual manner. His words from line 416 to the end are addressed to an ordinary theatre-going audience and are not suitable to any private entertainment. Fleay accordingly thinks that there were two forms of the play and two endings; the first and earlier form being adapted to some marriage festivity or Court entertainment; the latter to the public and to permanent use. The former ended with the speech of Oberon; the latter has the additional speech or epilogue of Puck. It is notable that in the first editions this character is here called *Robin*, though introduced for the preceding

speech as *Puck*. Fleay is convinced that where *Robin* occurs there has been little alteration, but that *Puck* indicates change.

Shadows—Imaginary beings as applied to the fairies; imitators as applied to the players; in either case presenting no real experience and character of our own. Cf. V. i. 20. Later, Shakespeare was wont to conceive of all human life as a play; and man as but a 'walking shadow.'

410. **Think** .....Think only the following (and it will remove the offence) that you have been asleep and dreaming. Modern punctuation which puts commas instead of brackets is not an improvement.

412. **Visions**—As the persons are shadows, so their doings are visions, *i.e.*, unreal appearances.

413. **Idle theme**—Cf. the name of Cupid's flower, love in idleness. 'Theme' (Gr. *thema*) is subject, argument, proposition, or secondarily, essay or discourse; here the subject-matter or lesson of the play.

414. **Yielding**—Producing. This line expands the adjectives weak and idle. **But** = than.

415. **Reprehend**—Censure, (governing theme).

416. **Mend**—Either perform this play better; or produce another of more value.

417. **As I am**—As certainly as I am.

418. **Unearned**—Unmerited; beyond our deserving.

419. **Serpent's tongue**—*i.e.*, hisses. An unpopular play was liable to be hissed off the stage. The figure may be regarded as based on similarity (Metaphor), or on symbol (Metonymy).

420. **Make amends**—Make up for our failure now; exerting ourselves all the more in consequence of your sympathetic attention.

421. **The Puck**—Here and in line 417 Puck is used as a title rather than as a personal name. See II. i. 32—41.

423. **Give me your hands**—Clap hands in approval of the play. To give (*i.e.*, shake) hands is often a manifestation of restored friendship, a sign of reconciliation.

APPENDIX A.

On the Text and Original Editions.

Various Readings, and conjectural Emendations of the Text, are sufficiently referred to in the course of the Notes. These are less important in this play than in many others. The variations between the First and Second Quartos are such as are compatible with their being derived from one manuscript; and are to be traced to the absence in earlier times of that regard for absolute accuracy which modern criticism enjoins. The First Folio Edition seems based on the Second Quarto, being apparently printed from a stage copy thereof which contained occasional corrections. In the weighing of differences, a choice has often to be made between the evidence of the First Quarto on the one hand, and of the Second Quarto supported by the Folios on the other. In the latter scenes of the play there seems to be a greater relaxation of carefulness.

The First Quarto was licensed by the Master Wardens of the Stationers' Company, the entry in the Register being as follows:—

8th Octobris.

Thomas Ffyssher. Entred for his copie under the handes of Master Rodes and the Wardens. A book called *A Mydsommer Nightes Dreame*.

The title page was: *A Midsommer Night's Dreame*. As it hath beene sundry times publickely acted by the Right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his servants. Written by William Shakespeare. Imprinted at London for Thomas Fisher, and are to be soulde at his shoppe at the Signe of the White Hart, in Fleete Streete, 1600.

In the Second Quarto the above words were given almost exactly except that, instead of the last sentence, there stood simply: Printed by James Roberts, 1600.

The First Quarto has a very archaic spelling. This Mr. Furness attributes to the peculiarity of a compositor composing by the ear from dictation. Such explanations are conjectural. The two quartos "keep line for line together," and are both from one source. See page 73.

APPENDIX B.

SOURCES OF THE PLAY.

All that can be regarded as probable is contained in the following sentences of Professor Dowden's primer: "In North's *Plutarch*, or in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, Shakespeare may have found the figures of Theseus and his Amazonian bride; from Chaucer also (*Wife of Bath's Tale*) may have come the figure of the elf-queen (though not her name Titania), and the story of Pyramus and Thisbe (see Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*); this last, however, was, perhaps, taken from Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Oberon, the fairy king, had recently appeared in Greene's play, *The Scottish History of James IV*; Puck under his name of Robin Goodfellow was a roguish sprite well-known in English fairy lore. Finally, in Montemayor's *Diana* which Shakespeare had made acquaintance with before *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* was written occur some incidents which may have suggested the magic effects of the flower-juice laid upon the sleeping lovers' lids."

It may be assumed that Shakespeare was familiar with CHAUCER and had read the translations of PLUTARCH and OVID. The translation of Montemayor's *Diana* was not published till 1598, so that Shakespeare's indebtedness to it cannot be regarded as very certain. It will be observed that in the scenes of the craftsmen or mechanics, and in the general handling of the Fairy Court and their relations to mortals Shakespeare is not supposed to be under obligations to any author. See Introduction, especially on the *characters*.

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